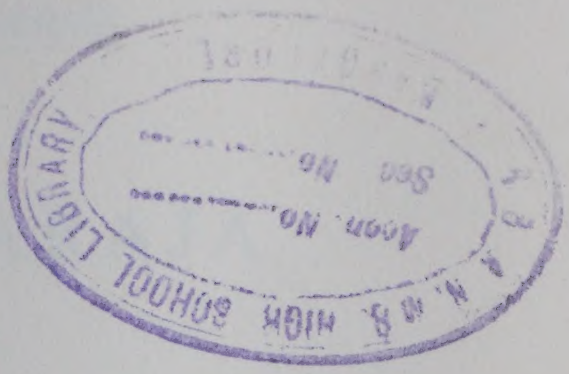

TYAGARAJA

NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY SERIES

TYAGARAJA

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FOREWORD

THIS COUNTRY has produced remarkable personalities in every walk of life since the earliest times. Our history is crowded with names of outstanding persons who have made notable contributions whether in art, literature, politics, science or other fields. Some are household words. There are many whose names are familiar but about whose life and work little is known to the public. There are others about whom people know little but who have made remarkable achievements.

The history of a country is, to a great extent, the history of its great men and women. They have moulded it and built it up. It is essential for the ordinary citizen to know something about these personalities in order to understand how our country has evolved.

In many countries, a dictionary of national biography has been published for such purpose. It is unfortunate that we have no such comprehensive work available. The intention of this Series is not to present such a scholarly and comprehensive book but rather to present to the ordinary reader, in a simple narrative form, the life of eminent men and women of the country from the earliest days. It is intended to make it a popular encyclopaedia of national biography in separate volumes.

We are grateful to Prof. K. Swaminathan and Shri Mahendra V. Desai for accepting the Editorship of this Series.

We are happy to bring out the biography of Tyagaraja on the occasion of the 200th birth anniversary celebrations of Tyagaraja and we hope that this biography will help the ordinary reader in knowing something of the life of Tyagaraja. Prof. Sambamoorthy who is a well-known Musicologist and has studied the life and compositions of Tyagaraja very closely has written this book for us.

NEW DELHI.
May 15, 1967

B. V. KESKAR

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I

INTRODUCTION

HERO WORSHIP is inherent in human nature. People are interested not only in the magnificent works left by a poet or a composer but also in his life, pedigree, education, the inner workings of his mind, the preparation he made for his career, the ordeals he had to pass through before establishing himself as a poet or composer of rank, and many other details. In India, due to some cause not easily explicable, people were interested more in the work of a person than in his biography or the evolution of his genius. We know precious little concerning the architects who have built the magnificent temples and musical stone pillars. Added to this is another phenomenon. Once a person becomes great in India, legends grow around him. In the case of Tyāgarāja, there are many such legends and stories. Patient research has doubtless confirmed the truth of some of these stories and disproved many others.

Tyāgarāja has left no autobiography. Nor had he with him a Boswell or a Lockhart to chronicle all the incidents in his life. With the exception of two or three of his disciples, the rest were more engrossed in learning his compositions than in chronicling the incidents of his life. But luckily for us enough sources exist from which it is possible to glean a fairly authentic

biography of this born composer of Tiruvaiyār. These sources may be analysed into :

1. The manuscript biographies of Tyāgarāja left by his disciples. There is one palm leaf manuscript written by Wālājāpeṭ Veṅkataramaṇa Bhāgavatar and Tanjore Rāma Rāo and another paper manuscript by Wālājāpeṭ Kṛṣṇasvāmi Bhāgavatar.
2. Biographical accounts contained in printed books published after him.
3. Internal evidence furnished by his compositions.
4. Oral tradition.
5. References to him in the compositions written in his praise by his disciples and subsequent composers.
6. Accounts of him preserved in the Diaries of scholars and rasikas who visited him.
7. Accounts in State Publications, Gazetteers, Memoirs etc. For instance, the Pudukkottai Gazetteer mentions how Tyāgarāja made an unlit lamp burn by singing Jyotisvarupini raga.[1]

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[1] The following account of the incident is given at the bottom of p. 870 of *A Manual of The Pudukkottai State*, Volume II, Part I (Second and Revised Edition) 1940.

"Tradition speaks of a strange phenomenon that is alleged to have happened during Sri Tyāgarāja's visit to Pudukkottai. The Rajah proposed a strange test to the musicians assembled in his Court. He placed an unlit lamp with oil and wick amidst them and challenged them to light it with their songs and without using a match. Encouraged by his Guru, who was also present, Tyāgarāja sang the raga Jyotisvarupini. To the wonder of the assembly the wick, it is said, caught fire and shone with varying brilliance according to the gradations of the rāga."

The biographical account of Tyāgarāja given in the following chapters is based on the details furnished by these sources.

II

EARLY LIFE

TRADITION has it that prior to his birth, Tyāgarāja, the presiding Deity of the Temple at Tiruvārūr appeared to Rāma Brahmam (father of Tyāgarāja) in dream and said that a male child, a *Saṅgīta Sāhitya Kalā Koviduḍu*[1] would be born to him and that he should be named Tyāgarāja.

Date of Birth

Tyāgarāja was born in Tiruvārūr in Tanjore District on the 25th of Chaitra of the Sarvajit year corresponding to 4th May, 1767. The house in which he was born is in New Street and bears the Door Number 6. He was born on a Monday in *Pūsa nakshatram* and *Kaṭaka lagnam.* The discovery of the horoscope of Tyāgarāja carefully preserved on a palm leaf in the Wālājāpeṭ Collection has helped to establish this date. Prior to the discovery of the horoscope, various estimates had been given of his age. It is definitely known that he passed away on the *Pushya Bahuḷa Panchamī* Day of the *Parābhava samvatsara*, corresponding to the 6th January 1847.

Subbarāma Dikshitar in the *Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśinī* mentions that Tyāgarāja lived for 77 years

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[1] A luminary in music and poetry.

thereby suggesting that he must have been born in the year 1770.[1] Panju Bhāgavatar in his Tamil biography of the composer mentions that Tyāgarāja lived for 88 years, thereby suggesting that he must have been born in 1759. Whereas no biographer has given the precise date of birth of Tyāgarāja, the number of years that he lived has been estimated to vary between 77 and 88.

If Tyāgarāja had lived for 88 years, the great event of Śatābhishēkam must have been celebrated about his 83rd year with great eclat. It is nowhere on record nor have we heard from karna parampara[2] that this celebration took place. Let it be remembered that Tyāgarāja became so famous in the latter part of his life that princes, pandits, poets, ascetics and saṅgita vidvāns[3] from different parts of India came to Tiruvaiyār, to pay homage to him. If the Śatābhishēkam did take place, his own disciples, some of whom were poets and composers, would have commemorated the event with inspiring songs and poems. But we have no proof of the existence of such poems and songs. Mr. Rāmuḍu Bhāgavatar of Tiruvaiyār (the great grandson of Tyāgarāja's elder brother) and many other persons from whom I have enquired told me that before the

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[1] In the *Saṅgita Sampradāya Pradarśinī* the biography of Śyāma Śāstri is given before that of Tyāgarāja. The various composers in the biographical section of that work are presented in the chronological order. Subbarāma Dīkshitar knew that Śyāma Śāstri was senior to Tyāgarāja in age and so has given precedence to him over Tyāgarāja.

[2] Oral tradition.

[3] Musicologists.

Śatābhishékam could take place, Tyāgarāja had attained *siddhi*.

Secondly there is the strong tradition in the family of Śyāma Śāstri, that Śyāma Śāstri was senior to Tyāgarāja in age. It is well known that the Saint of Tiruvaiyār had great regard for Śyāma Śāstri. This might be attributed to two causes : (1) that his contemporary was a brilliant composer and a sterling Devi bhakta and (2) that he was senior to him in age. The late Kirtanāchārya C.R. Śrīnivāsa Ayyaṅgār in his article in the *Cultural Heritage of India* Vol. III, P. 584 mentions that, of the Musical Trinity, Śyāma Śāstri was the oldest.

In a palm leaf which has been carefully preserved, the date of birth of Tyāgarāja, as also that of his disciple Wālājāpeṭ Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar, are given side by side, by Kavi Veṅkaṭa Sūri. This Veṅkaṭa Sūri was a brilliant poet and is the author of *Nowkā Charitram* in Sanskrit verse (now published). He was a disciple of Veṅkataramaṇa Bhāgavatar. Since he gives the dates of birth of his guru and his guru's guru (Tyāgarāja) in one and the same leaf they may be taken as correct.

His Pedigree

Tyāgarāja was a Telugu Brahmin of the Murigināḍu (also called Mulakanādu) sect. He belonged to the Bhāradvāja gotra and Āpastamba sūtra. He came of the Kākarla[1] vaṃsa and belonged to the group,

[1] Kākarla is a village in the Cumbum Taluq of Kurnool District. The remote ancestors of Tyāgarāja who lived in that village were encouraged during the reign of the Vijayanagar

(Contd.)

Cherukuruvāllu. In the 5th kanda padya at the commencement of his opera, *Nowkā Charitram*, he refers to himself as the moon of the Kākarla samudra :

Kākarlāmbudhi chandruḍu - Śrikaruḍaku Tyāgarāja chittaniveśa
Naukācharitra monarcheda - Śrikāntā chittagimpu Śriraghurāmā ||

In the first verse of the Maṅgaḷāshṭakam of Wālājāpeṭ Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar :—

Śrimat kākarlavamśābdi chandrāyamala tējasē
Pūrṇāya puṇyaśīlāya Tyāgarājaya maṅgaḷam ||

and in the *Dhyāna ślokas* in praise of the composer we find a similar reference.

Tyāgarāja refers to his being the son of Rāmabrahmam in the mudrā charaṇa of the kriti in Bilaharī Rāga *Dorukuna iṭuvaṇṭi seva*,

Rāmabrahma tanayuḍa Tyāgarāju tābāḍuchu nūchagā

and also in the phalaśruti to his opera, *Prahlāda Bhakti Vijayam* :

Śrirāmabrahma tanaya Tyāgarājēna nirmitam
Prahlāda bhaktivijaya prabandham bhuktimuktidām ||

In the first dvipada verse at the commencement of this opera he refers to himself as the son of Rāmabrahma :

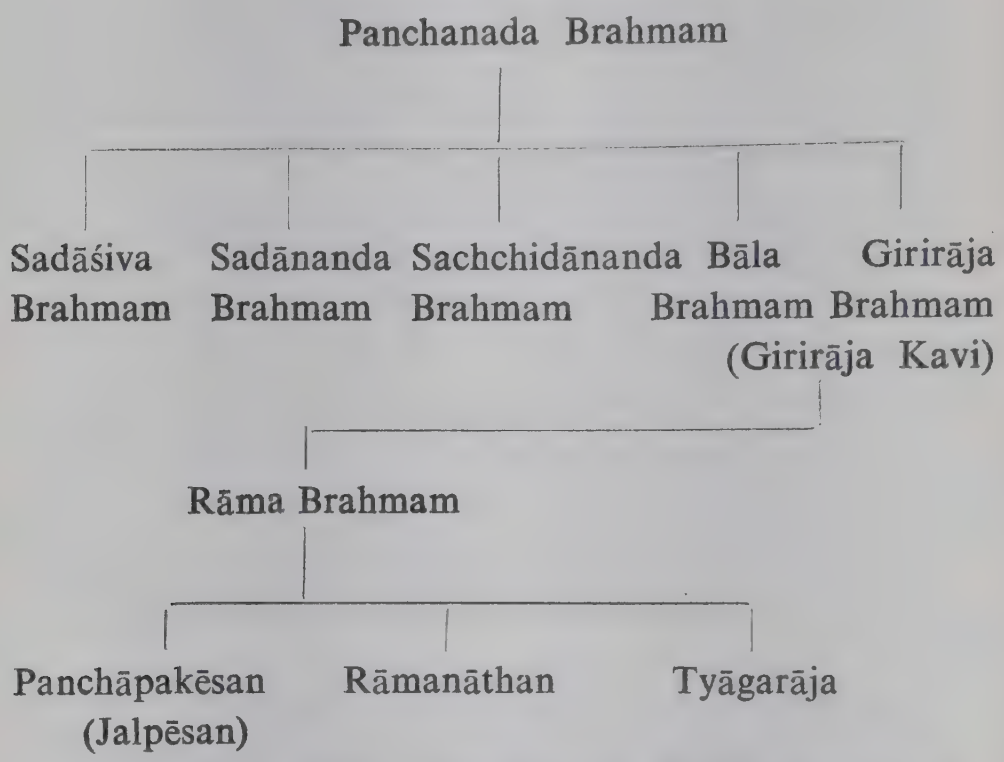
Rāmabrahma Sutuḍaina Tyāgarāju

Tyāgarajā's mother was Sītamma and she exercised

Kings to go and settle in the South to propagate Hindu culture. It may be of interest to note in this connection that the words like 'saliga' peculiar to the Rayalaseema dialect occur in the Sāhityās of Tyāgarāja.

not a little influence in moulding his character. The bard of Tiruvaiyār casually alludes to his parents in the pallavi of the kriti in Vasanta rāga "*Sītāmma māyamma, Śrī Ramuḍu mā taṇdri*".

GENEALOGY



Tyāgarāja's great grandfather was Panchanada Brahmam. He had five sons and the last of them was Girirāja Brahmam or Girirāja Kavi. Sadāśiva Brahmam, Sadānanda Brahmam, Sachchidānanda Brahmam and Bāla Brahmam were the names of his other four sons. Two of them, Panchanada Brahmam and Sadānanda Brahmam, became yogis early in their life and went to Sadānanda Kōna, a cave near Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. They did not return afterwards. Girirāja Kavi was a poet and composer. He was a

samasthāna vidvān during the reign of Shahāji Mahārājah (1684-1710). Shahāji Mahārājah is well known as the author of the beautiful dance drama in Telugu, *Pallaki Sēvā Prabandham*. This dance drama was performed in the Tiruvārūr temple on festival occasions in the past. Girirāja Kavi wrote Yakshagānas and songs on vedantic themes. He had five sons and of them Rāma Brahmam became a renowned scholar. Rāma Brahmam married Sītāmma. Three sons were born to him. They were named Panchāpakēsan, Rāmanāthan and Tyāgarāja. Rāmanāthan died young and Panchāpakēsan also called Jalpēsan lived to see Tyāgarāja's glory. Jalpēsan has been more sinned against than sinning. He was not such a cruel and heartless person as made out by some writers. Of course, it was a pity that he could not see eye to eye with the ideals that actuated his youngest brother. When Tyāgarāja refused the tempting offer from the Royal source, Jalpēsan burst forth :

Ni Rāma bhajana poṭṭakāyēnā ? bhaṭṭākāyānā[1]

It was just a human reaction to Tyāgarāja's spirited reply in his well known Kriti "*Nidhi chāla sukyamā*".

Tyāgarāja's maternal grandfather was Vīṇā Kaḷahasti Ayyar, a samasthāna vidvān in the Tanjore Court. Tyāgarāja's mother was a good singer and she knew a large number of the songs of Purandara Dāsa.

Tulajājī II (1765-1787 A.D.), the Mahārajāh of Tanjore, saw in Rāma Brahmam a great scholar and a sterling

---

[1] "Is your Rāma bhajana going to feed your stomach or clothe your body ?"

devotee. He requested him to read and expound the Rāmāyaṇa in his court during the Rāmanavami festival. Tyāgarāja accompanied his father on these occasions. While he read the ślōkas of the great epic, his father expounded them. Thus even as a boy, Tyāgarāja became familiar with the contents and significance of the great epic. Tulajājī gave Rāma Brahmam a piece of land in Paśupatikōvil (Tanjore Dist.) and a house in Tiruvaiyār. This was the only property left by him to his two sons.

Tyāgarāja's House

After the demise of Rāma Brahmam, the house in Tirumanjana Vīdhi in Tiruvaiyār was partitioned. The northern part fell to Tyāgarāja and the southern part to his brother. The partition of the house was brought about by the good offices of the local Tahsildār. This Revenue Official was very much interested in Tyāgarāja. He saw with his own eyes the cruelties[1] and tortures inflicted on the saintly composer by his brother. He thought the best way out of the difficulty was to make the brothers live separately. He persuaded the brothers to agree to partition. In the division, Tyāgarāja also got for his share the Ēkapīṭha vigraha which was the main source of inspiration to him. The partition did good to both the brothers. Tyāgarāja was able to get on with his

[1] It is said that once Jalpesan commanded Tyāgarāja to stand in the street in the sun for some time for some trivial offence. Tyāgarāja refers to his sufferings at the hands of his cruel brother Purvajulu Vada in the songs: Anyayamu Seyakural (Kafi) and Adaya Sri Raghuvera (Ahiri).

holy work without any hindrance. The separated elder brother soon noticed his folly and turned a new leaf.

Rāmuḍu Bhāgavatar, the great grandson of Jalpēsan (the elder brother of Tyāgarāja), lived in the southern part of the house. The picture of Kōdanḍa Rāmasvāmi, presented by Wālājāpeṭ Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar, which occasioned the song "*Nanupālimpa*" (Mohana) is there. Tyāgarāja's daughter and grandson lived for many years in the house wherein the great composer lived. Later the house was sold away. This house has now been acquired by the Tyāgabrahma Ārādhana Mahōtsava Sabha and has become a place of musical pilgrimage. People in thousands from all over India flock here to derive musical inspiration and spiritual exaltation. The person who purchased this house and was living there for some years told me that occasionally he and other members of his family got visions of the Saint in Unchavritti robes or Pūjā costume. There were occasions when they heard even the ringing of bells.

Upanayanam and Marriage

Rāma Brahmam came to Tiruvaiyār about the year 1774 along with the members of his family. The Upanayanam of Tyāgarāja took place in his 8th year (1774) and his marriage in his 18th year (1784). Tyāgarāja had an only daughter by name Sītālakshmi. She was given in marriage to Akhilāṇḍapuram Kuppusvāmiah. A son was born to them and he was named Panchāpakēśiāh. He proved a brilliant singer but died a premature death without leaving any issue. The widow of his grandson, Guruvamma by name,

went to her father's house in Tanjore taking along with her the Ēkapīṭha vigraha, worshipped by Tyāgarāja. She died in Tanjore early in the 20th century. The vigraha can now be seen in the house in Varāhappier Lane, Tanjore, where she spent her last days. Tyāgarāja's direct line is, therefore, extinct.

III

EDUCATION, CAREER AND PERSONALITY

TYĀGARĀJA was brought up with great care and affection by his parents. He first studied under his father and later in the Sanskrit School at Tiruvaiyār. He showed early signs of his greatness. Even in his teens he showed powers of composing. He wrote his school-boy compositions on the walls of his house. The father noticed them and felt a thrill and legitimate pride. He had them shown to such brilliant scholars of the time as Rāmaśēsha Śāstri and Bhāshyam Krishṇa Śāstri. They opined that those compositions were of real worth and worthy of preservation. "*Namō Namō Rāghavāya*" and "*Tavadāsoham*" (both of them, Divyanāma kīrtanas and in Punnāgavarāli raga) are two of his earliest attempts.

Tyāgarāja as a boy became familiar with a number of Divyanāma kīrtanas of Vijaya Gōpāla and other composers sung by his father during bhajanas. Naturally, he first exercised his creative talents in the direction of composing Divyanāma kīrtanās. Tyāgarāja's mother commanded a large repertoire of the songs of Purandara Dāsa (1484-1564) and he learnt a number of them from her.

Tutelage Under Soṇṭi Veṅkataramaṇayya

As a boy he went every morning to the garden to

pluck flowers for his father's pūja. This garden lay in a place called Andaṇarkurichchi which was at a short distance from the North Māḍa Street of Tiruvaiyār. On his way he halted in front of the house[1] of Soṇṭi Veṅkataramaṇayya (also called Soṇṭi Vina Veṅkataramaṇa Dās) and listened to the music lessons given by him to his disciples. One day, Rāma Brahmam noticed this. He requested Soṇṭi Veṇkataramaṇayya to teach music to his son. The Guru agreed with great pleasure and soon discovered that Tyāgarāja was a prodigy. All that the Guru could possibly teach was taught to him within the space of one year. At the conclusion of the tutelage, he blessed Tyāgarāja and ushered him into the world of music.

Tyāgarāja made an intensive preparation for his career as a composer. He came of a family noted alike for its literary and musical scholarship. He studied Telugu and Sanskrit from his father and attained scholarship in these two languages. He also attended the expositions of the Rāmāyaṇa given by his father, and this enabled him to get an intimate knowledge of the great epic. Early in his life he digested all the works on music available at the time. The thorough mastery of the science of music enabled him in later years to compose with self-confidence. If he has

[1] This house was situated near the corner of the North Māḍa Street and the lane that led to the Andanarkurichchi. This is a south facing house and bears the door No. 86. This house, until some years ago was the property of the Soṇṭi family. It has since been sold.

composed a number of kritis on the theme of the greatness of music and on the value of a knowledge of saṅgīta śāstra, it was because of his intensive study of musicology. He refers to various musical authorities in the kritis : *Vidulaku mrokheda* (Māyāmāḷavagauḷa raga) and *Saṅgīta jnānamu* (Dhanyāsi rāga). Though the works of some of these authorities have not come down to us, yet it is certain that he must have had access to them. It may be remembered that the contents of a number of works were transmitted orally in former times. It is a pity that, with the advent of printing, this capacity to memorise has declined.

His knowledge of musicology enabled him to create many rāgas and compose splendid compositions in them. That knowledge also enabled him to define and make clear the individualities of those rāgas which were in a somewhat nebulous condition. He was a composer with a vision. He saw into the future and laid the foundations for the further development of South Indian music along correct lines.

His Career

Tyāgarāja started his career at a time when there was a wealth of musical genius in the district of Tanjore. This district is the brightest spot on the musical map of South India, having to its credit the largest number of lakshaṇakāras, musicians and composers. The musical luminaries that adorned Tanjore exceed in number all the other districts of South India put together. For an unbroken period of some three centuries (1600-1900) Tanjore has remained an important

seat of music. The Nāik as well as the Mahrāṭṭa Rulers were great scholars and patrons of the Art. Their courts were adorned by eminent poets, musicians and composers. Even musicians and composers from other provinces came to Tanjore to win laurels. During the time of Tyāgarāja there were as many as 360 vidvāns in the Tanjore Court and each vidvān had the privilege of singing or performing in the Royal presence in the Saṅgīta Mahāl (concert hall) for only one day during the year.[1] For this annual exhibition of his talents, each musician strove his best in order to maintain his dignity and rank amongst his compeers. Some musicians specialised in rāgas of their choice. Of those who achieved eminence in particular rāgas, posterity remembers with pride such names as Tōḍi Sītarāmayya, Aṭhāṇā Appayya and Saṅkarābharaṇam Narasayya.

Unchavritti

Tyāgarāja lived a simple, devout life—a life inspired by the high ideals of plain living, high thinking, poverty and service to humanity. Excepting a portion of the ancestral house and some land, he had no property worth the name. He maintained his family and the large number of his disciples through *unchavritti* (mendicancy). In addition to the sishyas, there were a number of musicians, pandits and bhāgavatas who came

[1] The unique honour and privilege of singing on the New Year Day fell to the lot of Sonṭi Veṅkaṭasubbaya, the father of Tyāgarāja's Guru.

and stayed as his guests for varying periods, ranging from some weeks to months, to derive inspiration and spiritual solace. Tyāgarāja started for *unchavritti* once a week and what be obtained was sufficient to maintain himself, his family, his śisyās and the fluctuating number of visitors. Sometimes he was invited to perform *unchavritti bhajanas* in neighbouring places also.

The career of *unchavritti* is one of austerity, rigour, hardship and discipline. It is in this context that we have got to admire Tyāgarāja for his rigid adherence to high ideals, by refusing the tempting offer from the Ruler of Tanjore.

Incidentally it may be pointed out that *unchavritti* is taken to by persons with a spiritual bent of mind. It blesseth him that gives and him that takes. *Unchavritti* bhāgavatas are not a liability on the society. They live on what is freely and willingly offered. They spend the afternoons and nights in giving religious discourses and in that manner contribute to the spiritual elevation of humanity. Every religion enjoins upon a person to part with a fraction of his earnings by way of charity. The *unchavritti* bhāgavatas were learned men and noted for their piety. They were *Satpātras* (*i.e.* deservingly virtuous persons) to whom the *grahasthas* (house-holders) gave voluntarily. When the *unchavritti* bhāgavatas went along the streets, singing the hymns of the Lord, residents from the houses on either side came out with reverence and offered them rice, dāl and other articles of food.

It is significant that in the song "Ennāḷḷu tirigēdi" in Māḷavaśrī rāga, Tyāgarāja says that he had to gather

articles from salt to camphor (an idiom which means and includes all the necessaries of life) through *unchavritti*.

By the middle period of his life, his name and fame as a composer of front rank had spread far and wide. Rasikas and musical luminaries from distant places came to pay their respects to him. They told him how, in far-off places, his songs were sung and how their long cherished desire to see the author of those compositions had at last been fulfilled.

One of those luminaries to visit Tyāgarāja was Gopīnātha Bhaṭṭāchārya, a musician of eminence at that time in the North. It was during his visit that Tyāgarāja sang the song in Tōḍi rāga beginning with the words "*Daśarathē ! nī ṛuṇamu*". He says in the Anupallavi, "Oh Rasika śirōmani (Rāma) ! who has made my name shine in distant lands and to my hearty satisfaction . . ." We find the same idea echoed in his later piece "Ī vasudha nīvaṇti" in Sahāna rāga, wherein he says "Oh Lord ! who has established my renown in the whole world."

Tyāgarāja was alive to the fact that his compositions were of a sterling character, that they originated from a higher source and that he was only a medium to give utterance to them. In the above mentioned pieces in Tōḍi rāga, he says, "Oh God who taught me the kīrtanas which conferred prosperity and salvation." The word "*bōdhinchina*" significantly reveals the fact that the songs were just whispered into his ears. In the kriti "Chintistunnāḍe" in Makhāri rāga also, there is a reference to the supreme quality of his kīrtanas.

Svarārṇava

That Tyāgarāja had digested the famous work *Svarārṇava* (obtained providentially), is proved by the charaṇa of the kriti, *Svarārāgasudhārasa* in Saṅkarābharaṇa rāga. There he refers to himself in these terms, "This Tyāgarāja who has understood the mysteries of *Svarārṇava*." From the same song we learn that, in that work, the science of music was explained in the form of a dialogue between Śīva and Pārvati.

In the excerpts of this work now available, we find the lakshaṇas given for those rāgas which we come to know of for the first time through Tyāgarāja's compositions. This work again contains the interesting śloka :

Ātma madhya gatā : Prāṇa :
Prāṇa madhya gato dhvani :
Dhvani madhya gatō nāda :
nāda madhyē Sadāśiva :[1]

Tyāgarāja's fame was the talk of Tanjore in those days—a King to come and see an *unchavritti* bhāgavata, and yatis to attend the bhajanas of a person whose hereditary calling was *paurohitam*.

Tyāgarāja was a great vaiṇika. If some of the gamakas so characteristic of the vīṇa are found in his compositions, it is because of his mastery of this instrument. He kept his vīṇa in the puja room where he performed on it now and then.

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[1] In the centre of the body is the Prāna : in the centre of the Prana is the dhvani (sound) ; in the centre of the dhvani is the nāda (musical sound) ; and in the centre of the nāda resides Sadāśiva (the Eternal Goodness).

Rāma Nāma Recital

When Tyāgarāja started on his musical career, some interesting incidents took place. When he was barely 18, one Haridās (Rāmakṛṣṇa Yatīndra) from Kānchīpuram came to him and asked him to recite Rāma nāma 96 crores of times. Tyāgarāja took it as a command from above and completed the sacred task in 21 years. He recited on an average 1,25,000 nāmas every day. His wife also joined him in this task. During the afternoons, he used to sit in the maṇṭapa of the temple called Dakshiṇa Kailāś and carry on his Rāma nāma japam. This temple is on the southern wing of the Panchanadiś-varasvāmi Temple of Tiruvaiyār and it was in this Dakshiṇa Kailāś temple that Appar (7th cent.) had the darshan of Lord Śiva.

India has produced eminent Rāmabhaktas like Bhadrāchalam Rāmadās, Kabirdās and others, but no one else is credited with having recited the namē of the Lord 96 crores of times. This supreme achievement is the glory of Tyāgarāja and it is no wonder that he became the recipient of Rāma's grace.

During the course of this austere penance, it is said, Lord Śrī Rāma blessed him with Darshana many times. Pieces like "*Ēla nī daya rādū*" (Aṭhāṇa rāga) and "*Kanugonṇṭini*" (Bilahari rāga) were composed by him to mark such events. At the conclusion of each crore, it is said, he invariably had some concrete proof of Divine Grace.

He pays homage to this Rāmakṛṣṇa Yatīndra in the third invocatory kaṅdapadya to his opera "*Nowkā Charitram*".

Narada Episode

One morning, it is said, a Sanyāsi came to Tyāgarāja's house and listened to his music. Leaving some musical works behind him, he said he would return for bhiksha (meal) after a bath in the river Kāvēri. Tyāgarāja waited and waited and there was no trace at all of the quest. He fasted all day. In the night he appeared to Tyāgarāja in a dream and revealed that he was Nārada and that he had come to present him with some musical works from which he could draw fresh light and inspiration. Tyāgarāja woke up and scanned the bundle of granthas left by the sage. *Svarārṇava* was one of the works and he was delighted to see the same. Another grantha in the bundle was *Nāradīyam*.

It is interesting to note that in Tyāgarāja's life, whenever he was in difficulty or whenever he was in need of illumination or guidance, a Sanyasi invariably appeared before him and led him on to the path of light and victory.

For instance, when he was five years old, he was seized with a dire ailment which almost proved to be fatal. His father, who was disappointed with his first two sons, had pinned high hopes on his third son and when this disease overtook him he felt very sad. During the critical moment, it is said, a Sanyasi came and told him that the boy would be all right the next day and the prediction came true. Likewise the person who came and gave him the *Svarārṇava* and the person who asked him to recite Rāma nāma 96 crores of time were Sanyasis.

Personality

Tyāgarāja had a saintly face and an inspiring personality. He was thin and tall—about 5 feet 9 inches in height. He had a long neck and was fair-skinned. He wore a tulasī mani māla round his neck. It was an inspiration and a spiritual experience for anyone to have a darśan of Tyāgarāja in his *unchavritti* costume.

Tyāgarāja's life is full of interesting, inspiring and thrilling incidents. His reactions to some of the actions of his disciples, his appreciation of good music from whichever source it emanated and his charitable attitude to those who were jealous of his eminence, all reveal to us the man—Tyāgarāja. He used dignified language even when provoked.

Tyāgarāja had humility and simplicity and was easily accessible to one and all. The wisdom that people acquire late in their lives, he acquired early. His answers to many human problems are characterised by straightforwardness and charity. The trials that he had to undergo and his emerging out of them unscathed each time, teach the lesson : "Come what may, adhere to the path of righteousness and God's mercy will be with you though at the time you may fail to see it."

IV

SOME INTERESTING INCIDENTS IN HIS LIFE

The Ānandabhairavi Episode

A QUESTION often asked by the student of Karnatic music is why Tyāgarāja, who has to his credit a number of scholarly kritis in rare rāgas, has composed only three simple songs in the popular rāga, Ānandabhairavi. The answer is to be found in a remarkable incident.

One of his brilliant contemporaries was the gifted singer and actor, Tiribhuvanam Swāminātha Ayyar[1]. Like Aṭhāna Appayya, Tōḍi Sitārāmayya and others, this singer also chose to specialize in a particular rāga. He chose Ānandabhairavi. Very soon he attracted the attention of the vidvāns of his time by his scholarly exposition of this rāga,

The Bommaḷāṭṭam troupe to which he belonged happened to come to Tiruvaiyār once. The party staged their play night after night and drew large audiences. Tyāgarāja's disciples also attended the play. They were so impressed with Swāminātha Ayyar's exposition of Ānandabhairavi that they resolved to inform their Guru, Tyāgarāja, about the genius of the performer. The great composer heard of the extraordinary talents of the person but he did not give out his mind immediately. He argued within himself that

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[1] Tiribhuvanam is a place near Kumbakonam. Swāminātha Ayyar was an Archaka in the temple of the place and was also called Swāminātha Gurukkal.

there should be some truth in the report of his śisyās and finally resolved to go and attend the play *incognito*. He went one night and waited for the moment when the actor would begin the exposition of his favourite rāga. The moment came and the actor began his ālāpana and did it remarkably well. Tyāgarāja, the great man that he was, could not contain himself and rose from his place and at the conclusion of the performance waded through the crowd to go near the actor and express his appreciation. When the audience found that the great composer was present there, there was a flutter and all made way for him to go near the stage. Immediately there was profound silence and the huge audience anxiously awaited to hear the Great Composer speak. On seeing Tyāgarāja come near, the actor jumped down from the stage and fell at his feet and spoke in great humility, "Oh, Sir, it was sheer impertinence on my part to have attempted an ālāpana when you were here. Please pardon me."

Tyāgarāja replied, "My disciples told me of your extraordinary gifts in making an ālāpana of Ānandabhairavi. I came to hear the ālāpana myself. I am extremely pleased and delighted at your performance. I am so glad that my disciples told me of this."

Thunderous applause then followed. The actor, proud of the encomiums bestowed on him by Tyāgarāja, hesitated for a while and then in a faltering tone addressed him thus : "Revered Composer ! I have a boon to ask of thee." "It is granted even before your asking," replied Tyāgarāja.

"Sir, the boon is that from this day onwards you

should desist from composing in Ānandabhairavi rāga. Future generations will then enquire why it is that Tyāgarāja has not composed many pieces in Ānandabhairavi. Then this incident will be remembered by them, and incidentally my name also will go down to posterity."

All the people held their breath on hearing this strange and insolent request of the actor. But Tyāgarāja only smiled and, admiring the shrewdness of the actor, nodded his head by way of granting his request and withdrew.

True to the spirit of the promise given, he not only did not compose in Ānandabhairavi afterwards, but even did not teach the three pieces already composed by him in this rāga to his later disciples. The Divyanāma kīrtana, "*Rāma Rāma nī vāramu*," the Utsava sampradāya kīrtana, "*Kṣīra sāgara vihāra*" and the kriti, "*Nīkēteliyaka*" have come down to us through the disciples who had learnt them from the composer prior to this incident.

Nī dayachē

Once a darwān, who was a regular visitor to Tyāgarāja's bhajanas, requested the latter to teach him a song. The composer asked him to sing any piece he liked, just to gauge his vocal powers. Finding the limited nature, character and compass of his voice, he composed the simple kriti in Yadukulakāmbhōji "*Nī dayachē*," and taught it to him.

Prayer Heard

Wālājāpeṭ Veṅkataramaṇa Bhāgavatar (1781-1874) was one of the prominent disciples of Tyāgarāja. He may be described as Tyāgarāja's Boswell. At the beginning, he did not make the expected progress in music. Tyāgarāja felt sad and prayed to God that he might be pleased to confer musical wisdom on the śiṣya. From the next day onwards, it is said, Veṅkataramaṇa Bhāgavatar began to make amazing progress, and in the fullness of time became one of Tyāgarāja's reputed and respected disciples. He carried with him the largest repertoire of the saint's compositions, having been associated with him for over a period of 26 years. A strong and well-built man, he was named Ganapati by his co-disciples. Whenever work involving muscular energy had to be done for the master's household, Veṅkataramaṇa Bhāgavatar was commissioned for the purpose.

Vīṇa Kuppayyar

When Vīṇa Kuppayyar came to Tyāgarāja, to learn his compositions, the former never disclosed that he was an adept in vīṇa play. He was however longing for an opportunity to play on Tyāgarāja's vīṇa.

One day the great composer was out on some business. The other śiṣyas too had gone elsewhere. The long awaited opportunity came and Kuppayyar took his guru's vīṇa and was playing splendidly on it. Tyāgarāja's wife, who was startled at the delightful music of the vīṇa, came from the kitchen, peeped into the pūja room and found that it was only the śiṣya Kuppayyar

playing upon it. Unobserved she stood and was listening with interest to the exquisite music. After some time, Tyāgarāja came. Greeted with the delightful music of vīṇa, he paused in front of his house and was wondering who could be playing upon it. The music was so captivating that he sat on the pial of his house to listen to it further. At last his curiosity was so much roused that he went in to see the performer on the vīṇa. When the śiṣya saw his Guru, he kept the vīṇa back in its place with trembling hands and prostrating himself at his feet requested him to forgive him for playing upon the instrument without his knowledge and permission. But Tyāgarāja smilingly said, "Get up, my dear boy ! Don't worry. Why did you not tell me beforehand that you were such a gifted player on this instrument ?"

"*Dārini telusukoṇṭi*"

Dāsari, a reputed nāgasvaram player of the time, was once engaged to perform during the temple festival at Tiruvaiyār. One night, as the procession turned to the South Māḍa Street, the nāgasvaram player stopped at the junction of the Tirumañjana Vīdhi (where Tyāgarāja lived) and played the piece *Dārini telusukoṇṭi*, prefacing it with a brief ālāpana. The stillness of the night, the beautiful music, the sparkling saṅgatis of this masterpiece of Tyāgarāja in the Śuddha Sāvēri rāga, all made a tremendous impression on the listeners. The sage of Tiruvaiyār, who was listening to the piece from his house, was so touched by the brilliant fperormance that, leaving his house, he walked

up the distance, came near the performer and congratulated him on his brilliant performance. This is one of the five kritis which were composed by Tyāgarāja when he visited Tiruvottiyūr, a shrine six miles to the north of Madras.

V

LUMINARIES WHO VISITED TYAGARAJA

ILLUSTRIOUS PERSONS of the time, including poets, composers, musicians, ascetics and nobles, visited Tyāgarāja to have a glimpse of the great man. Some of them stayed as his guests for days and some for weeks. A few of those luminaries have recorded the spiritual thrill experienced by them while listening to his kritis. Some of those visits also occasioned compositions whose sāhityas contain references to those visits.

Tūmu Narasimha Dāsa

Tūmu Narasimha Dāsa was one of the prominent composers of devotional songs in Telugu and Sanskrit. These songs are widely sung in bhajanas. His songs are printed in the famous anthology of T. P. Kodandarama Ayyar entitled "*Bhagavad Bhajana Paddhati*". The song, *Pore mī yiṇṭlaku* in Āhiri raga, sung at the last quarter of a bhajana and just before sunrise, is the composition of Tūmu Narasimha Dāsa. He was a svanāma mudrakāra. Tūmu Narasimha Dāsa was born in 1790 and lived on Guṇṭūr. He visited many sacred places in North India and South India. During the course of his pilgrimage to Rāmēśvaram, he came to Tiruvaiyār to pay his homage to Tyāgarāja. This was in the year 1821. He heard the Mahā gāyaka sing his kritis in a captivating manner. Tears of ecstatic joy

rolled down the cheeks of Narasimha Dāsa as he heard Tyāgarāja and exclaimed that he was a veritable Nārada on earth. He wrote a sīsa padya and two other verses in Telugu immortalizing his experience. The verses translated will read thus :

" I heard the Ānanda Saṅkīrtanāvali;
I was thrilled by the bhāva siddhi and the suddha bhakti;
I saw the congregation of Devotees and Disciples and felt
transported at their sterling vocal music.
I saw the vinaya satsampat and vivēka
and the glory of Rāma bhakti.
I felt an experience which is not
within the reach of even Brahma"

" I realized that, in this world, Tyāgarāja
was the embodiment of all that is good (sadguṇa puñjam)
I felt as if swimming in the ocean of celestial bliss."

In another verse, he says :

"It is impossible to name another person in this world who can be said to be the equal of Tyāgarāja in Rāma bhakti. If only Tyāgarāja once with Prēma called 'Rāma !' forthwith came the response from Śri Rāma, 'Oh Tyāgarāja ! Here I am ! What is it that you desire?'"

After some days, Tūmu Narasimha Dāsa took leave of Tyāgarāja. After visiting Navapaṣāṇam, Rāmēśvaram, Śrīraṅgam, Jambukēśvaram, Kañchīpuram, Tirupati and Kāḷahasti he returned back to Guṇṭūr.

Gopīnātha Bhattāchārya

Gopīnātha Bhattāchārya was an adept in Hindusthāni music. He lived in Banaras. Tradition has it that when he planned a pilgrimage to Rāmēśvaram he was advised by a Divine Voice in a dream to pay a visit to Tyāgarāja. In the course of his pilgrimage, Bhattāchārya came to Tanjore and hastened to Tiruvaiyār. There he met the great composer, who accorded him a warm welcome. Bhattāchārya told him that he had heard his pieces sung by numerous pilgrims who came to Banaras and that he was for a long time thirsting to see the author of those kritis. "That great ambition of his was fulfilled that day," he concluded. Tyāgarāja was visibly moved and burst forth into the famous kriti in Tōḍi rāgā, Ādi tāḷa "*Dāsarathē nī ruṇamu*". The meaning of the anupallavi of this song is : "Oh Rasikaśirōmaṇi (Rama) ! you have made my name shine in far off lands to my heart's content . . . ." Tyāgarāja was alive to the fact that his compositions were widely sung and his reputation had spread far and wide. Later in his life also, he gives expression to the same idea in the kriti : *Ī vasudha nī vaṇṭi* (Sahāna rāga). He says in the charaṇa of this song, "*Bhuvanamandu kīrtigalka jēsē*". Gopīnātha Bhattāchārya was thrilled at this spontaneous outburst of melody. He stayed as the honoured guest of the composer at Tiruvaiyār for some time and then resumed his journey to Rāmēśvaram.

Gōpālakṛṣṇa Bhārati

Long before he wrote *Nandanār Charitram*, Gōpālakṛṣṇa Bhārati had attained name and fame as a fine composer of songs (viḍuti kīrtanas) in Tamil. Clothed in simple language and fine music, these songs were in the mouth of everyone in Tamil Nad at that time. *Nandanār Charitram* was first published in 1861 and the opera must have been completed a year or two before that date. Gōpālakṛṣṇa Bhārati, the rising composer in the thirties of the last century, desired to see Tyāgarāja and receive his blessings. One day he went to Tiruvaiyār and met the great composer in his house. The latter welcomed him, and enquired of the stranger whence he came. Bhāratiyār replied that he hailed from Māyavaram. Forthwith enquired Tyāgarāja : "Do you know of one Gōpālakṛṣṇa Bhārati there, who has composed some good songs in Tamil ?" Bhāratiyār was hardly prepared for this kind of tribute from the sage of Tiruvaiyār. With the humility characteristic of Bhāratiyār, he meekly replied "That Bhārati is my humble self, Sir". Tyāgarāja went into raptures when he heard this reply.

Tyāgarāja, far from looking upon other's compositions with jealousy or contempt, welcomed creative activity in others. He congratulated his disciple Subbaraya Sastri when he gave a recital of his newly composed kriti, *Ninu vina gatigana jagana* in Kalyani rāga before him in the Dharmasamvardhani temple at Tiruvaiyār.

It is also known how he was enamoured of the varnas of Vīṇa Kuppayyar and how he encouraged him to compose more and more varnas. Vīṇa

Kuppayyar has the proud record of having composed the largest number of tāna varṇas.

Gōpālakṛṣṇa Bhārati did not possess a good personality His human frame had some angularities and Tyāgarāja could not guess that this person was a composer.

Just at the time, the disciples of Tyāgarāja were singing a kriti in Ābhōgi rāga. When the song was finished, Tyāgarāja asked Bhāratiyār if he had composed any piece in Ābhōgi rāga. Gōpālakṛṣṇa Bhārati did not reply. Subsequently the disciples started singing other kritis of Tyāgarāja. That very night Bhāratiyār composed the now frequently sung piece "*Sabhāpatikku vēru deivam*" in Ābhōgi rāga and sang it before Tyāgarāja the next day. The great composer was impressed with the excellence of this Tamil piece and congratulated and blessed Gōpālakṛṣṇa Bhārati. When he learnt that this piece was sketched and completed the previous night his admiration for Bhārati's creative talents increased. The blessings of Tyāgarāja proved a turning point in his life and Gōpālakṛṣṇa Bhārati subsequently began to compose numerous songs in Tamil.

Bhāratiyār was impressed with the spiritual atmosphere of Tyāgarāja's house and the way in which the aged composer without standing on formalities mixed with his disciples and sang along with them.

Svāti Tirunāḷ's Emissary - Vaḍivelu

Svāti Tirunāḷ, the Ruler of Travancore, had heard a number of compositions of Tyāgarāja from the latter's disciple, Kanniah Bhāgavatar. The monarch naturally

desired to see the famous composer. Vaḍivēlu of Tanjore, one of the Samasthāna Vidvāns in Svāti Tirunāḷ's Court at the time and only three years senior to the Mahārājah in age, was commissioned for the purpose. Vaḍivēlu was squint-eyed. He was a brilliant singer and violinist. In recognition of his proficiency in violin playing, the Mahārājah presented him an ivory violin in the year 1834. Vaḍivēlu enjoyed the Mahārājah's confidence, and he undertook to go to Tiruvaiyār. Vaḍivēlu had seen Tyāgarāja and was a good friend of the great composer's disciple Viṇa Kuppayyar. But he had not been formally introduced to Tyāgarāja.

Vaḍivēlu came to Tiruvaiyār and took up his residence in a house in Tirumañajana Vidhi, the street wherein Tyāgarāja lived. Vaḍivēlu's house was in the opposite row and nearer the Kāvēri River. Tyāgarāja who went to the river invariably for his bath and Sandhyāvandana had to pass that house. After settling down in the house, Vaḍivēlu made it a point to sing every evening in his house, just to catch the attention of Tyāgarāja. When the great composer went to the Kāvēri to perform his Sandhyāvandana he listened to Vaḍivēlu's music on the way. On the very first day, touched by the music he halted for a while in front of Vaḍivēlu's house and then returned home. On the second day, Tyāgarāja halted for a longer time in front of Vaḍivēlu's house, and was convinced that the singer was a gifted person. On the third day, his curiosity was so much roused that he decided to enter the house to find out who was rendering such splendid music.

When Vaḍivēlu saw Tyāgarāja entering his temporary residence, he at once got up, bowed low before Tyāgarāja, welcomed him and said, "Sir ! It is a happy day for me. If you had so desired, I myself would have come to your house to sing. You have conferred upon me a great honour and privilege by coming here." Tyāgarāja congratulated him heartily on his splendid musical gifts and invited him to sing in his house the next day. Vaḍivēlu responded to the invitation.

Vaḍivēlu was anxiously waiting for an opportunity to broach the object of his mission to Tiruvaiyār. He sang a number of compositions of Svāti Tirunāḷ before the great composer and easily impressed him. On the next occasion, Vaḍivēlu sang so well that Tyāgarāja, in great ecstasy, said that Vaḍivēlu could ask of him anything he desired. The long longed-for opportunity had at last come and Vaḍivēlu pleaded in a gentle tone: "The Mahārājah of Travancore desires to meet you, Sir. Please come to ..... " and before he could complete what he wanted to say, he found that the great composer was taken aback by the request. After meditating for a while, Tyāgarāja replied, "I shall certainly meet him, and my promise will be fulfilled. But the meeting will take place in *the other world* and *not here*. His *Upāsanā Mūrti* is the same as mine (Padmanābha and Rāma)". Vaḍivēlu felt sad at the failure of his mission and left Tiruvaiyār shortly afterwards to report to Svāti Tirunāḷ the result of his errand.

There were no railways in those days and facilities for travel were very meagre. Though the incident

referred to above took place about twelve years before the demise of the royal composer, yet he and Tyāgarāja did not meet. Svāti Tirunāḷ would have himself come to Tiruvaiyār to see the great composer, but the political conditions of the time prevented him from leaving the State. Svāti Tirunāḷ passed away on the 25th December 1846 (Puṣya Śukla Aṣṭami) and Tyāgarāja on the 6th January 1847 (Puṣya Bahuḷa Pañchami).

Gōvinda Mārār (1798-1843)

Gōvinda Mārār was a brilliant singer of the first half of the 19th century. He hailed from Rāmamaṅgalam village in the Muvvāṭṭuppuzhā Taluq of Travancore. Besides possessing accurate layajñāna, he had a highly responsive ravai jāti śarīram. This enabled him to sing Pallavis in six degrees of speed. For this reason he was called Ṣaṭkāla Govinda Mārār. He is also known as Ṣaṭkāla Gōvinda Dās. In the history of South Indian Music, two other musicians associated with the Title "Ṣaṭkāla" are Ṣaṭkāla Narasayya of Salem and Vīṇa Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Dās of Vizianagaram. The latter was called "Ṣaṭkāla Chakravarti".

Gōvinda Mārār was a religious-minded man. Late in his life, he started on a pilgrimage to Banaras. He visited Trivandrum and stayed as an honoured guest in Svāti Tirunāḷ's Court. He later resumed his pilgrimage and came to Tiruvaiyār in the year 1842 to visit the holy shrine there and to pay homage to Tyāgarāja. The first disciple of Tyāgarāja to popularize the compositions of the great composer in Travancore was Kanniah Bhāgavatar. On hearing these compositions, many,

including Svāti Tirunāḷ and Paramēśvara Bhāgavatar (1815-1892) desired to go and see the sage of Tiruvaiyār.

Gōvinda Mārār used a seven-stringed tambura. With the exception of the mandaram, the other three strings were doubled. The instrument had two panchamas, two anusāraṇis and one mandaram. The instrument was bedecked with a flag on the top, a symbol of Mārār's challenging eminence in music. He sang, providing the drone accompaniment and the rhythmic accompaniment himself. In this respect he was a veritable *Ekallan* mentioned in early literature. While he twanged the strings of the tambura with the fingers of his right hand, he played on the Kañjira with his left hand. The Kañjira was held in position between the first two toes of the right leg and played.

It was an Ēkādaśi day when Gōvinda Mārār came to Tyāgarāja's house. During the night, Bhajana was going on. He went and sat amongst the devotees assembled there. After the pūrva bhāga was over, as was customary, the distinguished guests were invited to sing some songs ; (it is only after the visitors have had their chance to sing that the uttara bhāga commencing with the Divyanāma saṅkirtana is begun). When Mārār was requested to sing, he tuned his tambura which already attracted the attention of the audience by its flag and seven strings and began singing the 4th Aṣṭapadi *Chandana charchita* of Jayadēva in Pantuvarāḷi rāga, Ādi tāḷa ; (being the Ēkādaśi—Haridina—the choice of the piece was appropriate).

He started singing in the ati ati viḷambita kāla (first degree of speed). People were wondering why he started

on such a dead slow tempo but they were struck by the absolute precision in duration between count and count. Then he sang the chosen theme successively in ati viḷambita (second degree of speed), viḷambita (third degree of speed), madhyama kāla (fourth degree of speed), druta kāla (fifth degree of speed) and atidruta kāla (sixth degree of speed). As he approached the fifth degree of speed, the entire audience became spell-bound and when he sang in the sixth degree of speed, Tyāgarāja himself was taken aback at his *laya sampat*. By way of paying tribute to his genius, he asked his disciples to sing the Pañcharatna in Śrīrāga "*Endarō Mahānubhāvulu*," a composition already composed. All the disciples of Tyāgarāja knew the Pañcharatna Kritis well because they were regularly sung in the Uñchavritti bhajanas. "Prastutimpa" is the actual word used in this connection in the biography of Tyāgarāja by the Wālājāpeṭ disciples. This word means 'in order to specially praise him'. This also leads to the inference that Gōvinda Mārār was one of the Mahānubhāvas (great men) contemplated by Tyāgarāja. Gōvinda Mārār subsequently stayed as the honoured guest of Tyāgarāja for some days and then resumed his pilgrimage. He passed away in Paṇḍarpūr in 1843.

Wālājāpeṭ Kṛṣṇasvāmi Bhāgavatar played on the stringed instrument (Kinnari) in the Bhajana, when Ṣaṭkāla Gōvinda Mārār sang.

VI

PILGRIMAGE TO KANCHI, TIRUPATI AND OTHER PLACES

Kāñchīpuram

Upaniṣad Brahmam[1] of Kāñchīpuram wrote a Śrīmukham (letter) to Tyāgarāja about the year 1834 inviting him to his place :

"To Tyāgarāja,

Blessings. In my pūrvāśrama, your father and I were Sahapāṭis (disciples of the same master) and bosom friends. I have heard, through many, your brilliant compositions and am desirous of seeing you. I am past 100 years of age and hence cannot go to Tiruvaiyār to see you. I trust you will come to Kāñchī, stay as my guest and receive the Grace of Lord Varadārāja."

When Tyāgarāja made his decision known that he was going to visit Kāñchī, many disciples requested him to include visits to some of the other important places during the course of the journey. An itinerary was chalked out. The master was carried in a

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[1] The Upaniṣad Brahmam's commentary on the 108 Upaniṣads has now been published by the Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras. In the Upaniṣad Brahmendra Math in Kāñchipuram, one can see even now a valuable collection of palm leaf manuscripts.

Upaniṣad Brahmam was famous for his exposition of the Upaniṣads. He lived for 115 years.

Palanquin by his śiṣyas. Of the senior disciples who accompanied him during this historic pilgrimage were Tanjore Rāma Rao, Wālājāpeṭ Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar, Tillasthānam Rāma Ayyaṅgār and Sojiri Sītārāmayya. Some disciples went in advance to make arrangements for the sojourn of the Party. Umaiyāḷ-puram Kṛṣṇa Bhāgavatar and Sundara Bhāgavatar became disciples of Tyāgarāja after his return to Tiruvaiyār from this pilgrimage. Wālājāpeṭ Kṛṣṇasvāmi Bhāgavatar and Kañjīra vidvān Rādhākṛṣṇa Ayyar became disciples during this trip.

Tyāgarāja came to Kāñchipuram and stayed as the honoured guest of Upaniṣad Brahmam for some days. His bhajanas were largely attended and every one felt a devotional thrill by listening to his songs. The feeling that they had been cleansed came over everyone who heard his music. The songs *Varadarāja* (Svarabhūṣaṇi rāga) and *Varada navanītāśa* (Rāgapañ-jaram) were composed by him in praise of Lord Varadarājā during this visit.

Wālājāpeṭ

Next he visited Wālājāpeṭ. There he stayed for 12 days and conducted Bhajanas in the Bhajana Mandir of Wālājāpeṭ Veṅkṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar. On the last day of his stay in Wālājāpet, he was taken in a grand procession. Mysore Sadāśiva Rao, who was at that time a disciple under Wālājāpeṭ Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar, has immortalized the event in a beautiful kriti in Tōḍi rāga, beginning with the words, "*Tyāgarājasvāmi veḍalina*".

Tirupati

Tyāgarāja then proceeded to Tirupati. In those days pilgrims had to walk all the seven miles on the hill steps to reach the top. He and his party started ascending early in the morning and it was about 11 a.m. when they reached the top. Tyāgarāja, in his excessive desire to have darṣan of the Lord of the Seven Hills, immediately went to the sacred tank, had his bath, finished his prayers and rushed to the temple. The other members of the party were slowly getting ready to come to the temple. When he came near the *sanctum sanctorum* he was disappointed to find the curtain preventing him from having darṣan of the Lord. He thought that his own pride had taken the form of the curtain and prevented him from having the darṣana. In great humility, he sang the song "*Tera tiyyaga rādā*" in Gauḷipantu rāga—Ādi tāla. The opening bars of the piece reveal clearly the distressed state of his mind. When he concluded the song, it is said, the curtain fell asunder as if by a miracle, and he saw Lord Veṅkaṭēśvara in all His Glory. He was overjoyed beyond all description and immediately burst forth into the song "*Veṅkaṭeśa ninnu*" in Madhyamāvati rāga—Ādi tāḷa. In the meantime, devotees had gathered in large numbers and witnessed this miracle. The temple archakas also came and honoured the composer. It was only then that people came to know that it was the great Tyāgarāja that had come there. *Taramā ni mahimā pogoḍa* in Kalyaṇī rāga—Rūpak tāla is another kriti composed in praise of Lord Veṅkaṭēśvara.

Puttūr[1]

He left Tirupati. One early morning he happened to pass by Puttūr. (Puttūr is now a railway station between Tiruttaṇi and Rēṇiguṇṭa on the Madras-Bombay Line). There he found a number of people gathered round a dead body with a lady and a child in deep mourning. On enquiry he came to know that a certain pilgrim came to the place the previous night along with his wife and son and knocked at the doors of all the houses to rest overnight. But none of the people opened the doors of their houses. They suspected that it was a tiger that was knocking. (Even now the jungle near Puttūr is infested with tigers.) The pilgrim decided to take shelter in the village temple for the night. As it was late in the night, the temple doors were bolted from within by the watchman. The pilgrim decided to scale the temple wall and, after entering inside, open the door from within and sleep in the temple along with his family. It was pitch dark and, as he scaled the wall and got down on the other side, he fell into a well and got drowned. The wife anxiously and patiently waited for her husband. It was nearing mid-night and for fear of attack and molestation, she did not even raise an alarm. Due to exhaustion, she slept.

The temple gates were opened the next morning. The temple servants were horrified to find the dead body in the well. They had it removed and brought outside the temple. The villagers had gathered and

[1] Dead man brought back to life.

were offering condolences to the lady on her sad plight. It was just at that time that Tyāgarāja's party happened to pass by that place.

He came to know that the name of the person who got drowned was Sēṣayya. He found a Tuḷasi-maṇi hārām[1] round his neck. Tyāgarāja asked his disciples to sing the kriti, "*Nā Jivādhāra*" (Bilahari rāga—Ādi tāḷa). At the conclusion of the piece, he sprinkled tuḷasī tīrtham, *i.e.* water in which ocymum sanctum was soaked. It is said that immediately the dead man came back to life and woke up, as if from sleep. Sēṣayya prostrated himself before Tyāgarāja and received his blessings and resumed his pilgrimage.

Bilahari rāga itself is said to be a life-giver and its time of singing is morning. The kriti, "*Nā Jivādhāra*" starts with *magaṇa*, a life-giver, and it has the quintessence of Bilahari rāga in it.

Shōlinghur

At Shōlinghur, he sang the kritis, "*Narasimha nanu brōvavē*" (Bilahari rāga—Chāpu tāḷa) and "*Śrī Nārasimha mām pāhi*" (Phalarañjani rāga—Dēśādi tāḷa) in praise of Lakṣmī Narasimhasvāmi, the presiding Deity of the place. He sang "*Pāhi Rāmadūta*" (Ṣaḍvidhamārgiṇi rāga—Rūpaka tāḷa) in praise of Āñjanēya, in the Āñjanāya shrine at Shōlinghur.

The song in Bilahari rāga—Chāpu tāḷa "*Nivēgāni nannevaru gāturā*" was composed in praise of the Deity of a Viṣṇu sthala on the banks of the Svarṇamukhi river running by the side of Kāḷahasti.

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[1] It is worn only by pious men.

Madras

Kōvūr Sundara Mudaliyār, a wealthy citizen of Madras at that time, was a disciple of Upaniṣad Brahmam of Kāñchīpuram. He was a friend of Vīṇa Kuppayyar. When Tyāgarāja visited Kāñchīpuram, Kōvūr Sundara Mudaliyār was introduced to him by Upaniṣad Brahmam. At the suggestion of Upaniṣad Brahmam, Tyāgarāja agreed to visit Madras and stay as the guest of Sundara Mudaliyār for some time. Sundara Mudaliyār's palatial residence was situated in No. 4, Bunder Street, George Town, Madras. Tyāgarāja stayed there as the honoured guest of Sundara Mudaliyār and expounded the Dēvagāndhāri rāga for eight days in succession. During the first six days, at the conclusion of each stage of the ālāpana, he sang one of his own kritis in Dēvagāndhāri rāga. On the seventh and eighth days he sang a pallavi in this rāga and followed it up with niraval and kalpana svaras. It was a veritable feast to the ears of the sangita vidvāns and rasikas who came to listen.

While in Madras, Tyāgarāja visited the Pārthasārathi-svāmi Temple in Triplicane and composed a kriti, in praise of the Deity. This piece is in Tōḍi rāga—Jhampa tāḷa—and begins with the words: "*Svāri veḍalina Pārthasāradhini ganarē*".

Tiruvottiyūr

At the request of his disciple, Vīṇa Kuppayyar, Tyāgarāja visited Tiruvottiyūr, a holy place six miles to the north of Madras. This place has been hallowed

by the visits of Ādi Śāṅkarāchārya (7th cent. A.D.), Tirugñana Sambandar, Appar, Sundaramūrti Nāyanār and Paṭṭinattār. When Tyāgarāja came near the shrine of Tripurasundari, he was captivated by the *sānnidhyam* of the place and he sang the now famous *Tiruvottiyūr* Pañcharatnam.

The five pieces belonging to this Pañcharatnam are :

Sundari nī divya	Kalyāni
Sundari nannindarilō	Bēgaḍa
Dārini telusukoṇṭi	Śuddha sāveri
Sundari ninu varṇimpa	Ārabhi
Kanna talli	Sāvēri

All the five pieces bear the stamp of the maturity of his musical conception.

Kōvūr

At the request of Kōvūr Sundara Mudaliyār, Tyāgarāja visited Kōvūr, a place 13½ miles to the west of Madras. This is a beautiful village and contains an ancient shrine. Sundarēśvara is the name of the God and Soundaryanāyaki the name of the Goddess. Tyāgarāja sang the Kōvūr Pañcharatnam here.

The five pieces constituting this group are :

Sambhō Mahādēva	Pantuvarāḷi
Ī vasudha nīvaṇṭi	Sahānā
Kōri śevimpa rāre	Kharaharapriya
Nemmi vachchina	Kalyāṇi
Sundarēśvaruni	Śaṅkarabharaṇa

The Thief Incident

After visiting Kōvūr, Tyāgarāja and his party

commenced their return journey to Tiruvaiyār. Kōvūr Sundara Mudaliyār, out of great devotion to the composer, placed a bag containing 1,000 gold pieces in his palanquin without the knowledge of Tyāgarāja. He told his disciples that the sum was intended for being utilised for Rāma navami, Śrī Jayanti and Vaikuṇṭa Ēkādaśi festivals and that they should not refuse to take it. The disciples gave tacit consent.

In the course of journey, the party had to pass through a jungle one night. The place was infested by the Nāgalāpuram thieves, noted for their skill in shooting pebbles from catapults. Tyāgarāja and his party were surrounded by these robbers. When the disciples whispered into Tyāgarāja's ears, he said :

"Why should we be afraid of them. We have nothing they would care to steal."

Vīṇa Kuppayyar whispered that in the palanquin was a bag containing 1,000 gold pieces given by Sundara Mudaliyār.

"Throw it away to the thieves," was Tyāgarāja's reply.

Tanjore Rāma Rao immediately intervened and said, "No, Master ! That money was given for being spent during the Rāma navami, Śrī Jayanti and Vaikuṇṭa Ēkādasi festivals. It is God's money and we have no right to throw it away to the robbers."

"If it is God's money, He will take care of it. Why should we bother about it?" said Tyāgarāja.

So saying he plunged into meditation. After a few minutes he sang the song "*Mundu venaka niru*" (Darbār rāga—Ādi tāḷa)—The pallavi reminds one of the śloka :

[1]Agrata : prṣṭataschaiva pārśvataścha Mahābalau
Ākarṇapūrṇa dhanvānau rakṣyētam Rāma
Lakṣmaṇau

The purport of the song is, "Oh Rāma ! the slayer of Mura and Khara ! Come, come with Lakṣmaṇa quickly to our rescue". It is said that immediately two lads appeared on the scene and rained arrows on the robbers who got frightened and ran away to a distance. The two lads subsequently came near the palanquin, whispered "The Robber menace is over" and disappeared.

The procession was moving all the time and, at day break, the party came to a village and halted in a choultry. The thieves, stupefied by the heroic lads, were accompanying the party at a respectable distance. At dawn, they came near Tyāgarāja and asked who those two lads were, who had rained arrows on them.

Tyāgarāja could think only of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and in great ecstasy sang the song "*Enta bhāgyamō* (Sāraṅga rāga—Ādi tāḷa). The anupallavi describes how the Lord came and spoke to him and freed him from the menace. Tyāgarāja praised the thieves who had the supreme fortune to see the divine lads. He gave them *Rāma nāma upadēśa* and opened a new chapter in their lives.

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[1]अग्रतः पृष्ठतश्चैव पार्श्वतश्च महाबलौ ।
आकर्णपूर्ण धन्वानौ रक्ष्येतं रामलक्ष्मणौ ॥

VII

LAST DAYS

IN THE YEAR 1845, at the commencement of the Tamil year Viśvāvasu (about April or May), his wife passed away. In the following year Prābhava, he himself was called to the sacred feet of the Lord in circumstances which can only be described as miraculous.

His Last Moments

On the Daśami night preceding his siddhi, he had the famous dream which he has immortalized in the Sahānā rāga kriti "*Giripainela*". In the dream, he was told that he would be called to the lotus feet of the Lord in 10 days' time. On the following night, *i.e.* Puṣya Śuddha Ēkādasi night, towards the close of the bhajana, he addressed the congregation thus : "On the coming Puṣya Bahuḷa Pañchami day a miracle will take place. Please, all of you, come on that day". On the Chaturthi day, *i.e.* the day prior to his demise, he requested Paramahamsa Brahmānandēndra Swāmi to initiate him into sanyāsa āśrama. At first, the holy sage refused saying that Tyāgarāja was already a Jīvanmukta and there was no need for him to be initiated into the sanyasā āśrama. But on Tyāgarāja repeating his request, he was initiated into the āśrama and was given the name Nādabrahmānanda. After this, Tyāgarāja said to those assembled, "Tomorrow at 11 a.m. Śrī Rāma has promised to take me back; please

perform bhajana continuously from now onwards". This news soon spread and a large number of people had gathered the following morning to witness the last moments of the Saint. Amongst the disciples that were present at that time were Umaiyālpuram Kṛṣṇa Bhāgavatar and Sundara Bhāgavatar, Tillasthānam Rāma Ayyaṅgar, Ayyā Bhāgavatar and Wālājāpeṭ Kṛṣṇasvāmi Bhāgavatar. Also present were Kāñchi Veṅkaṭādri Svāmi and Taluq Tahsildar Śyāma Rao. On the morning of his siddhi, he composed and sang the two famous songs :

Paramātmuḍu — Vāgadhiśvari rāga (Ādi tāḷa) and
Paritāpamu — Manōhari rāga (Rūpaka tāḷa)

Tyāgarāja sat in Yoga samādhi. At the predicted moment, the congregation heard a mysterious sound emanating from the Saint's head. Soon they saw a bright flash of light leaving his head and vanishing slowly high up after proceeding in a northerly direction. The mortal remains were then taken to the Kāvēri bank with all honours and to the accompaniment of music and interred in a place adjoining the samādhi of his Guru, Soṇṭi Veṅkaṭaramaṇayya.

Samādhi Utsavam

Tiruvaiyār is noted for the two grand festivals :
(1) Sapta sthāna utsavam taking place in April and (2) Tyāgarāja utsavam taking place in January. Thousands of visitors and devotees throng to Tiruvaiyār each year to attend these festivals.

Over the spot where his remains were interred, a brindāvanam was erected. For Śiva bhaktas it is usual

to instal a liṅgam. For Haridāsas it is customary to erect a brindāvanam. Brindāvanam is a small hollow brick structure of four feet or more in height and in the interior of this, the sacred plant tuḷasi (ocymum sanctum) is planted and grown.

Ever since his siddhi, the Umaiyāḷpuram disciples and others used to go to the Samādhi every year during the Puṣya Bahuḷa Pañchami day, do pūjā there and come home and perform the āradhana proper. It is said that on these occasions they became choked, tears rolled down their eyes and they could hardly sing.

From the year 1907 onwards, the Samādhi utsavam entered on a new phase. Narasimha Bhāgavatar and Pañju Bhāgavatar of Tillāsthanam along with the great violinist, Govindasvāmi Piḷḷai of Tiruchi, began to celebrate the Utsavam on a grand scale.

The late Bangalore Nāgaratnammāḷ spent all her savings in constructing the fine temple over the Samādhi. The shrine constructed in 1925 has since been considerably improved and expanded.

The task of supervising the construction of the temple was left to the late Mr. S. A. Ramasvami Ayyar of Tiruvottiyūr, who relates an interesting incident.

He had no idea how far he should dig around the Samādhi on the river bank for the purpose of laying the foundation. He consulted the local experts and they were not able to enlighten him. He made bold to dig and, when a particular depth was reached, the smell of gum benzoin (incense) emanated from the spot. He. thought it was a warning that he should not dig further down. He started laying the foundations from that depth

and later on constructed the shrine.

The late Sūlamaṅgalam Vaidyanātha Bhāgavatar along with a friend was performing Sandhyāvandanam one evening at the Kāvēri bank near the Samādhi. Suddenly, he heard the sound of "Rām, Rām". No one was near and the sound seemed to emanate from the Samādhi itself.

The Tyāgabrahma Āradhana Mahōtsava Sabha has since the year 1940 been celebrating the annual festival of Tyāgarāja in Tiruvaiyār on a grand scale. The Samādhi has become a veritable place of pilgrimage, inspiring and purifying thousands of musicians, music-lovers and devotees who go there year after year.

VIII

TYAGARAJA'S DISCIPLES AND SISHYA PARAMPARA

TYAGARAJA had more disciples than any other composer in India's musical history. These disciples as well as the disciples of these disciples became distinguished composers or musicians. Many important luminaries in the music of the post-Tyāgarāja period belong to Tyāgarāja's śiṣya paramparā (line of disciples).

The disciples of Tyāgarāja learnt their master's compositions with great zeal and enthusiasm. Some of them were already pallavi vidvāns at the time of the commencement of their tutelage under him. All of them learnt his scholarly compositions with avidity and devotion. Some specialized in his *Divyanāma Kīrtanas*. Disciples like Vīṇa Kuppayyar and Wālājāpeṭ Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar served the Master for many years. Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar, being a man of learning and well versed in Sanskrit and Telugu, acted as a scribe to Tyāgarāja and earned his love and blessings. All the disciples were conscious of his greatness and felt the divine spark within him.

Tyāgarāja paired off his disciples according to the pitch, timbre, compass, responsive character and capacity of their voices and taught to each pair not more than 200 kritis. Thus he distributed his thousands

of compositions amongst the several pairs of his disciples. In his days, the art of printing had not become popular in India. The only way then to ensure the remembrance of the correct renderings of the kritis was by frequently repeating them. The cleverer disciples were however allowed and encouraged to learn more pieces either from the composer himself or from other senior disciples. It is thus that the Wālājāpeṭ disciples and the Umaiyāḷpuram disciples came to have a rich repertoire of Tyāgarāja's compositions.

In his earlier days, when pupils without a good grounding in svarajṅānam came, Tyāgarāja, himself took them through a course in graded *Divyanāma kīrtanas* and thus prepared them for his more advanced compositions. In later years, however, when pupils without svarajṅānam came to him, he sent them to another musician to undergo the preparatory course. After the preliminary course they came to him for lessons in kritis. The first kriti that Tyāgarāja invariably taught to his disciples was "*Śri Janaki manohara*" in Īśamanōhari rāga. The Umaiyālpuram disciples followed in the footsteps of their master when in their turn they taught this piece first to the disciples who came to learn under them.

Many people profited by the classes that Tyāgarāja conducted for his disciples in the evenings. There are manuscripts containing the songs of Tyāgarāja in some skeleton notation, giving mnemonical clues for their rāgas and tālas, and written during the composer's life-time. An examination of these manuscripts reveals that a number of his valuable compositions have yet

to gain publicity.

Tyāgarāja did have the necessity for a large number of disciples. They not only recorded those compositions which fell from his lips during his moments of inspiration, but also taught them in their turn to others. Some disciples provided the drone (tambura) accompaniment and others the rhythmic (mridaṅga and jālra) accompaniment in his house bhajanas and street (Uṅchavritti) bhajanas. It is only those who perform bhajanas that can realize the valuable help of competent singers and accompanists in this form of musical worship. Some disciples fetched flowers for the Guru's daily pūja, and yet others looked after his household work. None of them paid any fee.

Not a day passed without his composing a piece or two. On Ēkādasi days when he was lost in spiritual ecstasy, more pieces came out of him. The vidvān disciples faithfully recorded those compositions in notation which otherwise would have been lost to humanity. Towards the later part of his life, the number of his compositions had reached such a staggering number that, by way of recapitulating them, he asked the disciples who had specialised in them to give complete recitals of them according to a planned programme. With the exception of his favourite pieces which he asked his disciples to sing frequently in his bhajanas, he perhaps heard his other pieces only once during a year.

Among the disciples of Tyāgarāja, Tanjore Rāma Rāo was the seniormost in age and he was practically the Composer's private secretary. He planned out his

itineraries and accompanied him during his tours. He accompanied Tyāgarāja during his famous trip to the North, covering Kānchipuram, Tirupati, Wālājāpeṭ, Shōlinghur, Madras, Tiruvottiyūr and Kōvūr. He was able to move with his master with a certain amount of freedom. For this reason, the other śiṣyas used to refer to him as Chinna Tyāgarāja. Whenever they desired something to be communicated to their master, they did so through Tanjore Rāma Rāo. Rāma was younger than Tyāgarāja by two years. It may be interesting to know that the disciples used to refer to Wālājāpeṭ Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar as Ganapati since he was somewhat stout and strong. Whenever work involving physical labour had to be done by the disciples, they invariably entrusted it to 'Ganapati'. Tyāgarāja was never referred to by name but by the dignified appellation of 'Ayyarvāḷ'.

Wālājāpeṭ Disciples

Of the thirty prominent disciples of Tyāgarāja, the names of Wālājāpeṭ Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar and his gifted son Wālājāpeṭ Kṛṣṇasvāmi Bhāgavatar will be specially remembered by posterity. They have rendered signal service to the cause of Karnatic music by preserving and popularizing the sterling compositions of Tyāgarāja. Veṅkṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar was a great scholar in Sanskrit and Telugu. He carefully noted down his Guru's compositions and operas. It is from the Wālājāpeṭ collection that the musical world came to know of the three operas of Tyāgarāja : *Prahalāda Bhakti Vijayam*, *Nowkā Charitram* and *Sītārāma Vijayam*. While the texts of the first two

operas have been published, the text of *Sītārāma Vijayam* has yet to be traced. This opera pertains to the story of the Uttara Rāmāyaṇa.

Both Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar and Kṛṣṇasvāmi Bhāgavatar have left detailed biographies of the Composer. The saint's date of birth as also his horoscope have been preserved for us by them.

Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar was a tall, stout, well-built man and was called 'Ganapati' by his co-disciples. For 26 years, he was associated with Tyāgarāja. In his 41st year, he married Muthulakshmi Ammal. For improving his business, he went to Wālājāpeṭ.

Kṛṣṇasvāmi Bhāgavatar, the eldest son of Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar, has composed some kritis and svarajatis. He assisted Mr. A. M. Chinnasvāmi Mudaliyār in his publication "*Oriental Music in European Notation*" by giving correct versions of the compositions of Tyāgarāja.[1]

It was the custom for Kṛṣṇasvāmi Bhāgavatar to sing every forenoon ten kritis of Tyāgarāja and then take his meal. The ten kritis sung on one day were not repeated the following day. Hence in a year he sang 3,600 kritis and thus kept himself in lively touch with all the compositions of the Saint.

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[1] A proof sheet of the above book containing the corrections carried out by Wālājāpeṭ Kṛṣṇasvāmi Bhāgavatar can be seen in the Wālājāpeṭ collection housed in the Saurashtra Sabha Library, Madurai.

IX

TYAGARAJA AS A COMPOSER

TYAGARAJA was a born composer. His compositions have rightly become classics. He was a prolific composer and composed with uncommon facility. He was a versatile genius. He has left behind him compositions belonging to the realms of pure music and applied music. His compositions help a lover of music to taste something of the sweet nectar of true music. To him, music was not merely a means to an end but an end in itself.

Tyāgarāja lived during a period of intense musical activity. His age was in fact the brightest period in the history of South Indian music. Many of the musical luminaries who are the pride of Karnatic music lived during his time. The atmosphere in Tanjore and round about Tiruvaiyār at that time was most conducive to the development of musical genius. In such congenial environments, Tyāgarāja grew up and soon established himself as a star of the first magnitude in the firmament of South Indian music. He inherited his musical talents from his maternal ancestors and his literary talents from his paternal ancestors. His maternal grandfather was Vīṇā Kāḷahasti Ayyar, a samasthāna vidvān in the Court of Tanjore, and his paternal grandfather was Girirājakavi, the author of some Yakshagāṇas and songs on Vedantic themes. Even in his teens Tyāgarāja showed promise of his future greatness in music. His early

compositions attracted the attention of such eminent scholars of the time as Rāma Śēsha Śāstri and Bhāshyam Krishṇa Śāstri. Soṇṭi Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Dās, his Guru, saw in his pupil a rare musical prodigy. The Vaiṇika had a celestal foretaste of his pupil's greatness.

Tyāgarāja was a born genius and a gifted composer. He was an expert Vaiṇika and a brilliant singer. It is known that he possessed a Gandharva sārīram (a celestial voice). The fact that he expounded Dēvagāndhāri rāga for six days during his stay in Madras is proof of his extraordinary creative talents. He has left behind him gems belonging to the spheres of art music, sacred and operatic music. The art of composing came to him naturally. He was a scholar in Sanskrit and Telugu and was proficient in the Jyōtisha, Gaṇita and Mantra śāstras. His music is of unsurpassable nobility and greatness. The individuality of his different pieces in one and the same rāga is amazing. In Tōdi rāga alone he has composed more than 30 pieces. In his compositions we get a happy blending of intellectual and emotional qualities. He composed because of the inner urge within him. His scholarly kritis, his Divyanāma Kirtanas and Utsava Sampradāya Kirtanas, his operas, his Ṣata rāga ratnamālika and his group kritis will for ever be remembered with pride and zeal. In the history of world music, it is difficult to name another composer who was at the same time a poet, saint and philosopher, one who lived up to his ideals, and did not care for the riches and pleasures of this world.

Tyāgarāja spoke the language of absolute music. He asserted and proved that it was possible for a person to

attain Moksha (liberation) through the path of pure music. God himself was Nādabrahma—Embodiment of music. Contemplation of God through pure music led one to that Divine consciousness longed for by sages. Tyāgarāja's kritis are so many specimens of absolute music. The beautiful Sahityas in them only serve to enrich his kritis and make them doubly great. It is our good fortune that he introduced all his surging poetic thoughts and ideas into his kritis instead of embodying them in separate poems, in which case his appeal would have been only to a limited section of the public interested in pure literature.

Tyāgarāja belongs to that galaxy of saints and seers who have made India great. He has founded a musical empire which will withstand the test of time. India's spiritual glory and traditions have been kept alive by him. He has broadcast the eternal wisdom of the sages of India through his songs.

Tyāgarāja's compositions have a dynamic musical energy in them. The generating proto-plasmic force is there. When studied intensively, they have the magic force of developing one's abilities.

Tyāgarāja was an enlightened soul. He represents the essence and peak of our culture. His compositions reveal the soul of South Indian music. His two kritis : "*Vidulaku mrokkeda*" (Māyāmāḷavagauḷa rāga) and "*Saṅgīta jñanamu*" (Dhanyāsi rāga) prove that he was familiar with many of the ancient authorities and their works.

The concept of *Nāda rachana*, *i.e.*, a musical composition in the real sense of the term actually begins with

him and his brilliant contemporaries. Prior to his time, more value was attached to the sāhitya and music was thought of only as a vehicle for the sāhitya. This accounts for the fact that there are a number of sāhityas in the same tune by earlier composers and sometimes even by the same composer. In every one of Tyāgarāja's kritis we find a new varṇa meṭṭu (tune). He has carved out of the rāgas beautiful forms of enchanting beauty.

In Tyāgarāja's kritis we find the happy blending of cultural and spiritual elements. His ambition was to create new forms which would at the same time satisfy the cultural and spiritual needs of the nation. The top-ranking performer derives as much musical ecstasy from his compositions as the bhakta derives spiritual joy.

Tyāgarāja is the greatest composer of the modern period. His charming, flowing, captivating and refreshingly beautiful style of musical writing and his sāhityas teeming with Upanishadic truths and sublime thoughts have a perennial appeal. The versatile and prolific nature of his compositions, his *gandharva gāna* coupled with the ring and splendour of his voice, the colourful incidents in his life, all these evoked the admiration of his contemporaries. He was adored as a saint even in his life-time. He preached the gospel of the realisation of God through the combined path of music and devotion. While Bōdēndra Sadguru Svāmi emphasised the recital of Rāma nāma, Tyāgarāja showed the easier path of gāna mārga (path of music) in the recital of the name of the Lord. The musical sound became a powerful medium in his hands for the

communication of swelling musical thoughts. He has given to us in clear terms the mystical experiences of a nāda yogi. He has pointed out the relative significance of music (Saṅgita), musical knowledge (Saṅgita jñana) and knowledge of the science of music (Saṅgita Śastra jñana). In his kritis we find the happy culmination of high flown music and splendid sāhitya and both of them springing from the foundation of Bhakti. This feature of his compositions may be summed up in the phrase, Kritiguṇatrayam.

Tyāgarāja was a true spiritual singer and offered his music to God and none else. He was very devout and read the *Rāmāyaṇa* every day. He was a composer with a living mind. His compositions are full of life. Some of his songs have a bearing on the problems of life. He was well up in śāstra and anubhava.

In his compositions, we see the confluence of the triple factors of bhāva, rāga and tāḷa, in the correct and natural order of importance. His compositions are saturated with the triple elements of saṅgita bhāva, sāhitya bhāva and bhakti bhāva. He was a past master in the art of weaving melodies even with tiny rāgas. In his handling of the old rāgas like Pratāpavarāḷi and Dipaka, a rejuvenated freshness is seen. He is a *Saṅgīta siddhānti*.

Indian music is a fathomless system. Tyāgarāja has dived deep into its mysteries and brought out rare gems of resplendent beauty. The consummate mastery of the technique of composition is revealed in his kritis.

Tyāgarāja combined in himself literary talents, musical excellence and intense devotion. He represents the soul of India. Music and religion are woven together

in his life. His experiences of the *divine ānanda* have found clear expression in his musical utterances. To see him was to worship him.

The Gōpichandana tripuṇḍra and the akṣaya mark on his forehead reflect the true Bhāgavata, Tyāgarāja. Tyāgarāja is an immortal. His compositions will endure till eternity.

Valmiki, Kambar and Tuḷasi Dās may be described as Ramayana Kavis but Tyāgarāja has the destinction of being the Rāmāyaṇa Vāggĕyakāra. Valmiki no doubt set the Ramayana to music and taught them to Lava and Kuśa. It is in this musical garb that the two lads rendered the epic poem in Śri Rāma's court. But that music is now irretrievably lost. The verses of *Kamba Rāmāyana* are even now sung to non-rhythmic music and the verses of the Rāmāyaṇa of Tuḷasi Dās are sung in a few tunes. But Tyāgarāja imported such a variety of rāgas and tunes for his Rāmāyaṇa kirtanas that he stands without a parallel.

Tyāgarāja and Bhajana

With Tyāgarāja, a fresh chapter in the history of Bhajana begins in South India. He made this democratic form of worship more popular and appealing, by laying equal emphasis on the musical and devotional rendering of sacred songs. He also bridged the gulf that was threatening to develop between the bhāgavatas and saṅgīta vidvāns.

Since the days of Tāḷḷapākam Chinnayya (15th century) the Bhajana as a form of group worship took deep root in the spiritual life of South India. Every

temple came to have a Bhajana party attached to it and Bhajanas came to be performed on Ēkādaśi and other sacred days. It must of course have taken a century or more for the detailed rituals and sequences of the items to get evolved.

Any one who has attended a bhajana knows that there are two principal divisions therein : Pūrva bhāga and Uttara bhāga. The pūrva bhāga begins with a Nāmāvali and is followed by the Tōḍaya maṅgaḷam. Then a Guru Kirtana, an Aṣṭapadi and Taraṅgam are sung. Songs in praise of Gaṇapati, Kumāra, Āñjanēya, Sarasvati, Paramēśvara and Pārvati are next sung. This is followed by the upachāra kirtana. Songs in praise of the Iṣṭa Dēvata (Rāma or Kṛṣṇa) are then sung. This marks the conclusion of the first half and the second half then begins. The Divyanāma Saṅkirtanam and the Utsava sampradāyam are the two main divisions of the uttara bhāga. Distinguished visitors who may be present at a bhajana will have their opportunity to sing just before the uttara bhāga commences.

During the Divyanāma saṅkirtanam, the lamp near the Deity is removed and placed in the centre of the hall and the Bhāgavatar[1] along with select devotees makes pradakṣinams round the lamp, slowly, singing Divyanāma saṅkirtanams[2]. At the conclusion of the Divyanāma saṅkirtanam, the lamp is replaced in its

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[1] Leader.

[2] Special sacred songs composed for the purpose.

original position near the Deity or Picture as the case may be. The Ḍolotsavam next begins. The Bhajana, when performed in the orthodox system, will occupy about seven hours, roughly four hours for the pūrva bhāga and three hours for the uttara bhāga. This system had been evolved by the time of Bodhēndra Sadguru Svāmi (18th century) and had since been widely followed in South India.

Tyāgarāja's Ēkādasi bhajans were moulded rigorously after the orthodox pattern. The composer used to sing his own Divyanāma Kirtanas and Utsava sampradāya Kirtans, for the purpose. In the Pūrva bhāga of the bhajana, his classical kritis teeming with brilliant saṅgatis and technical beauties were sung either by him or his śiṣyas. The outstanding feature of Tyāgarāja's bhajanas was the confluence of the aesthetic element and the spiritual element. Tyāgarāja's bhajanas were attended by hundreds of people. These included Saṅgita vidvāns, Pandits, Bhāgavatas, ascetics, Rājahs, Zamindars and the common people. All of them derived spiritual solace by śravaṇam, *i.e.* listening. The saṅgita vidvāns were thrilled by the captivating music of his compositions. The pandits and the bhāgavatas were inspired by the lofty ideas contained in them. The Rājahs, Zamindars and the common people were touched by the spiritual content of the songs. The entire congregation was moved to spiritual heights and every one felt the chastening influence of Tyāgarāja's bhajanas. Every Ēkādaśi bhajana registered at least three or four kritis. They emanated from the mouth of the composer during his moments of spiritual and

musical exaltation.

Prior to Tyāgarāja's time, the Bhāgavatar, who had been initiated into the '*Bhāgavata cult*' with the presentation of the *sūtra*[1], was rarely a musician of rank. The musicians who were too proud of their attainments did not look upon the bhāgavatar with the respect due to him. The bhāgavatar who was too deeply engrossed in his spiritual greatness in turn looked upon the vidvān with a sort of indifference and sometimes even with contempt. This schism between the bhāgavatas and saṅgita vidvāns became very pronounced in course of time. Tyāgarāja came at the right time to bridge this gulf. The proud vidvān had to bow down before Tyāgarāja, the great composer, and joined him in his bhajanas whether performed at home or in the streets. The street bhajanas included his Uñchavritti bhajanas and bhajanas undertaken during the Sapta sthānam festival of Tiruvaiyār. The bhāgavatar was indirectly influenced by Tyāgarāja to look upon music not as something which had a mere pleasant appeal, but as a serious art which when studied and cultivated properly led one to taste the nectar of spiritual bliss. According to the bhāgavata tradition, mere recital of the name of the Lord and his Kalyāṇa guṇas was sufficient as long as it was done with purity of mind. Tyāgarāja went a step further and said that the goal of spiritual bliss was hastened when this recital of the name of the Lord and his Kalyāṇa guṇas was coupled with the discipline of

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[1] The red sacred thread tied round the upper part of the right arm as the insignia of his status as Bhāgavatar.

singing to śruti śuddha, svara śuddha and laya śuddha. Thus he imported a fresh vitality into the Bhajana movement.

Tyāgarāja will long be remembered for the masterly way in which he brought the saṅgita vidvān and the bhāgavata together and made them understand each other. He emphasized that when a bhakti rachana was made to emerge through the stream of pure music, the effect was doubly great.

Tyāgarāja and Ram Charita

The *Vālmiki Rāmāyana* is not a complete chronicle of all that took place in the life of Rāma. Vālmiki did not accompany Śri Rāma as a private secretary to chronicle the incidents in his life. He wrote the famous epic out of inspiration and it stands to reason that some of the episodes left out by him might have suggested themselves to later and equally devout writers of Rāma Charita.

In Tyāgarāja's compositions, we come across some interesting episodes in the life of Rāma, not mentioned by Vālmiki, Tuḷasi Dās and Kambar. Some of them are furnished below :

Vāchāma gōcharamē manasā — Charana (Kaikavaśi Rāga).

At the commencement of the forest life, Rāma, Sīta and Lakṣmaṇa came to a jungle wherein the chamara mrigams[1] were roaming about. Sīta saw one such animal

[1] Yak.

and was very much enamoured of its attractive tail. She desired to possess it as a memento of her forest life. The moment the idea arose in her mind, Rāma got scent of it and in his excessive anxiety to please her, who had never known what forest life was, he immediately sent a bāṇa to cut the tail of the animal. But when Rāma's bāṇa came near the animal, it acquired tattvajñāna. The animal argued within itself, "If I lose my tail, I will become an object of mockery amongst my brethern. Why not give myself to Rāma bāṇa ? I am sure to attain mōkṣa by the act." So arguing, the animal, as the bāṇa came near to cut its tail, immediately swerved round and showed its neck to it. Rāma, who saw this from a distance, was taken aback. He argued within himself, "Even for the sake of my beloved Sīta, I should not kill an animal. Ahimsa is the greatest of dharmas." But Rāma bāṇa can never go in vain. So immediately Rāma sent another bāna which darted at terrible speed and neutralized the effect of the previous bāṇa and thus gave prāṇa dāna[1] to the animal.

Kāṭala nērchina—Charana (Dīpaka Rāga)

On the occasion of Rāma Paṭṭābhiṣēka various dānas[2] had to be given to virtuous people, not only as part of the coronation ceremonies but also to get the Emperor freed of the sins committed by him in the course of his battle with Rāvaṇa. The *tila dāna*[3] also

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[1] Gift of life.

[2] Gifts.

[3] Sesame gift.

had to be given[1]. In order to induce a *satpātra* to receive the *tila dāna* Vasiṣṭa announced that a lump of gold would be given to the person who volunteered to receive the *tila dāna*. Even this bait did not evoke response for some time.

One Siṅgara Muni lived on the outskirts of Ayōdhya at the time. He was poor and was spending his time in penance and meditation. His wife who heard the tempting offer announced by the beat of tom-tom[2] begged her husband to volunteer to receive the gift and said that they could lead a life of luxury. Her husband became angry at her request and cried, "Do you want me to lose all my spiritual attainments for the sake of this wretched gold?" "No, Lord", she replied. "After all Śri Rāma is the Supreme Lord. incarnate. After receiving the dāna, please look at him. The darśan of the Chakravarti will neutralize the evil accruing to you by receiving tila dāna." Siṅgara Muni caught the sense of her remark and sent word to the palace that he was prepared to come and receive the tila dāna. When the news spread that Siṅgara Muni had offered to receive the dāna, people were talking amongst themselves, "It is a thousand pities that a person of Siṅgara Muni's spiritual eminence should have succumbed to the influence of gold and descended to this level !"

The sage Vasiṣṭa, in the meantime, sensed the

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[1] Usually only very poor and uncultured people will receive this dana.

[2] Dandora.

intentions of Siṅgara Muni and his wife.[1] So he arranged for a curtain which by some device would come down immediately after the dāna was given and prevent Siṅgara Muni from looking at Śri Rāma.

On the particular day, Siṅgara Muni came to the palace. When the time came for the tila dāna, he went near the special platform. Śri Rāma gave the dāna to the accompaniment of the appropriate mantras and as the process was completed, the curtain came down as if by magic. Śri Rāma as well as the courtiers were taken by surprise. When Siṅgara Muni looked up to see Śri Rāma, he found, to his dismay, only the curtain. He cursed himself at not having the darśan of the Chakravarti and retraced his steps slowly. In the meantime, the gold had gone to the house of Siṅgara Muni and his wife who was in great joy prepared herself to receive her husband. When she found him coming with tears in his eyes, she was taken aback. "I have lost all my tapas and tejas by listening to your tempting advice," exclaimed Siṅgara Muni. She never anticipated this turn of events and became plunged in sorrow. After a while she recovered and said to her husband, "My Lord! What has happened cannot be helped. I have a suggestion to offer. On the concluding day of the coronation festivities, Śri Rāma will come in procession in a chariot. The procession will be passing the corner near our hut. Please stand at that time near the corner tree and, as soon as the

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[1] It is a rule that a person who receives tila dāna should not, after receiving the gift, look at the giver.

chariot comes there, please go near Śri Rāma and have his darśan."

Siṅgara Muni without food and water waited anxiously for the day and hour of the procession. As the procession came to the corner near the hut on that day, he threw himself in front of Śri Rāma and had his darśan. Immediately he regained all his spiritual greatness and tejas. Śri Rāma remarked on that occasion: "After all you have received the tila dāna and so you had to suffer for this short time. Now you are rid of all that and I bless you."

Siṅgara Muni felt very happy and returned home. He did not even touch the gold sent from the palace.

Tyāgarāja says in this Kriti, "Did Siṅgara Muni enjoy the gold that he got ? Was Vibhiśana able to take Raṇganātha to Laṅka ? Things take place as previously ordained."

Vinanasokoni—Charana (Pratapavarali raga)

This incident belongs to the Uttara Rāmāyaṇa. One day Rāma and Sīta played the game of "Pallanguzhi" in their private chamber. At the conclusion of the game, both of them had a delightful conversation. This conversation was overheard by Āñjanēya and Bharata as eavesdroppers and they feasted their ears. Tyāgarāja in his inimitable poetic style says "Oh Rāma ! I am anxious to listen to that sweet conversation with the same fervour as Bharata and Āñjanēya". The composer adds special weight to the piece by his Saṅgatis on the

phrase "*A madhuramaina palukulu*"[1] in the anupallavi.

Alakalalla—Madhyamāvati raga

There is a tradition that at the conclusion of each crore of Rāma nāma recital Tyāgarāia was blessed with Rāma darśan in some form or other. He immediately immortalised the vision in the form of soul-stirring Kirtanas. *Kanrugōnṭini* (Bilahari) and *Alakalalla*[2] (Madhyamāvati rāga) are examples of two such Kirtanas.

On two occasions, when Rāma used the bow, the beautiful curls of hair adorning his forehead gracefully moved aside with a jerk. The first was when, at the beckoning of sage Viśwamitra, Rāma got up and took the Śiva danuṣ and bent it. Finding it heavy, Rāma had to apply some force to bend the bow and, in that act, the beautiful curls of hair moved aside and Viśwamitra felt a spiritual thrill at this sight.

When Rāma shot his fearful bāṇa to quench the pride of Māricha, the alakas again moved aside causing an ecstatic thrill.

His Philosophy

India has produced from time to time great men who have restated the truths of Indian philosophy and reminded the people of their glorious heritage. Tyāgarāja belongs to this noble group.

Tyāgarāja is a great reconciler of the warring tenets of Hindu religious philosophy. He emphasized the

[1] Those sweet words.

[2] Alakas are the beautiful curls of hair adorning the forehead of young princes.

soundness and truth underlying the different systems. He presented profound truths in very simple language. Devotees believe that we rise from humanity to divinity. On the day of his samādhi, he realized the Nirguṇa brahmam and became one with the Universal Self.

He expounded eternal philosophic truths through simple songs like *Anāthuḍanugānu* (jiṅgḷa rāga). There is much of universal wisdom and touching poetry in his songs.

He preached the philosophy of absolute music through precept and example. He showed how self-realization through music was possible. He spread his message of music from Tiruvaiyār itself, without undertaking a propagandist tour for the purpose.

His Voice

Tyāgarāja had a high-pitched voice. His silvery voice was capable of sweeping flights in all the three octaves. He possessed a gandharva śāriram—the voice of a celestial singer. Whenever he halted on tāra ṣaḍja in the course of a kriti in the anupallavi or charaṇa, the effect was so superb that his śiṣyas stopped their singing and allowed the audience to listen to the lustrous tone of Tyāgarāja's voice. His voice was rich in harmonies and tone-colour bands.

When Pañchanadayyar, father of Mahā Vaidyanātha Ayyar, was once complimented by a friend on the fascinating character of his son's voice, he retorted, "What is my son's voice, when compared to the fascinating melodious voice of the great Tyāgarāja ?"

It may be pointed out that when Mahā Vaidyanātha Ayyar began to give concerts in 1856, some of the older musicians of the time remarked with great relief, "Abba ! After Tyāgarāja, at least we have one singer whose vocal music falls pleasingly on our ears."

Repetition of Sangatis

Tyāgarāja has composed in the largest number of rāgas ever attempted by a single composer. The number of rāgas in which he has composed exceeds two hundred—a record in Indian music. His compositions as now known and sung amount to a staggering total of more than a thousand.

His compositions contain fine *viśrānti sthānas* or halting places. When good-voiced singers halt at those places, *i.e.* pañchama or tāra ṣaḍja as the case may be, the aesthetic joy of listeners can hardly be described.

He paved the way for the future development of music along right lines. He has shown how a melodic system of music based on rāgas offers a rich and powerful medium for the portrayal of musical thoughts and ideas. The summit of melodic perfection is reached in his compositions.

Most of his songs are in the form of touching appeals and intimate conversations addressed to his beloved Rāma in an inexhaustible variety of situations.

Tyāgarāja, the adored of every saṅgīta rasika, wrote in a sweet and sonorous style.

Many great men are associated with some dōṣa (flaw) or other. Tyāgarāja was singularly free from all these excepting for a slight choleric temperament. He

rightly became an object of adoration. Unlike some poets, even on provocative occasions, he used dignified language.

The one significant lesson that we learn from his life is : "Come what may; as long as one adheres to the path of righteousness, God's mercy is definitely on his side, though he may fail at the moment to see the ultimate fulfilment of God's justice."

X

COMPOSITIONS

INDIA'S priceless contribution to world music is her rāga system. Rāgas are abstract concepts, but musical compositions and ālāpanas in them are concrete forms through which we are able to aurally feel and recognize the individualities of rāgas. The compositions of Tyāgarāja, delineating as they do, in close detail, the varied contours and other features of rāgas, have rightly become classics. His compositions are of sterling worth and are for all times. They contain in them things of eternal value. His life is full of colourful incidents and it is an inspiration to read them. The whole gamut of emotion is traversed by him in his compositions.

Classification

From the point of view of musical construction, Tyāgarāja's kritis may be classified into :

(1) Very simple (*e.g. Vinavē ō manasā*—Vivārdhani rāga).

(2) Simple (*e.g. Sujana jīvana*—Khamās rāga).

(3) Medium (*e.g. Evarani*—Dēvāmṭṛavarṣiṇi rāga).

(4) Difficult (*e.g. Nājīvadhārā*—Bilahari rāga).

(5) Complicated (*e.g. Dārini telusukoṇṭi*—Śuddha sāvēri rāga).

The dhātu of *Koluvaiyunnāḍē* (Bhairavi rāga) is

couched in the tāna style and that of *Ō Raṅga śāyi* (Kāmbhôji rāga) in the ālāpana style.

From the point of view of the ideas contained in his sāhityas, his kritis may be classified into :

(1) Didactic (*e.g. Sāntamu lēka*—Sāma rāga).

(2) Ethical (*e.g. Manasu nilpa sakti*—Abhōgi rāga). Herein he says, "If one has not the ability to control the manas, of what avail is the puja performed by one ? How can a wicked person hope to get purified by a plunge in the Kāvēri and Mandākini rivers ?"

(3) Songs of salutation (*e.g. Vidulaku mrokkeda*—Māyamālavagaula rāga).

(4) Songs in praise of music.

(5) Songs addressed to manas like *Vinave ō manasa* (Vivardhani rāga) and *Uṇḍedi Rāmuḍokaḍu* (Hari-kāmbhōji) wherein he teaches indirectly.

Songs of Repentance

Sometimes he was obliged to perform *adharmic* (unrighteous) acts by his cruel brother and some of his songs of repentance are a consequence of them.

Eṭula brōtuvo teliya	—Chakravākam
Duḍuku gala	—Gaula

This piece belonging to the Ghana rāga Pañcharatnam contains an *anubandham* like the pieces *Sādhiñ chenē* (Ārabhi rāga) and *Endarōmahānubhāvulu* (Śrirāga).

Prālabda	—Svarāvaḷi
Tolinēnu jēyu	—Kōkiladhvani
Nōrme Srī	—Varāḷi

Songs of Complaint

Anāthuḍanugānu	—Jiṅgḷa
Tolinē chēsina	—Śuddha baṅgāla
Nādupai balikēru	—Madhyamāvati
Mariyādagādura	—Saṅkarābharaṇam
Epāpamu	—Aṭhāṇa
Nāyeḍa vañchana	—Nabhōmaṇi

That the triteness of a rāga does not in the least stand in the way of Tyāgarāja producing a brilliant composition is proved by kritis like *Anāthuḍanugānu* and *Nāyeḍa vañchana.*

In the songs like *Rāma nī yēḍa* (Dilīpakam), *Eṭulaina* (Sama) and *Teliyatēru* (Dhēṇuka), he sympathises with the lot of those who were devoid of devotion.

Gadya Sāhityas and Padya Sāhityas

In the sāhityas of Tyāgarāja, we come across padya (metrical) sāhityas and gadya (prose) sāhityas. In some kritis, we find that a part of the sāhitya is of prose and a part after a metrical pattern.

Śrī Rām Jaya Rāma	—Yadukulakāmbhōji
Tavadāsōham	—Punnāgavarāḷi
Vēṇugānalōtuni	—Kēdāragaḷa
Bhajana parula	—Suraṭi

The sāhityas of these four kritis are padya sāhityas.

Viḍamu sēyavē	—Kharaharapriya
Manusu svādhīna	—Śaṅkarābharaṇa

The sāhityas of these two kritis are gadya sāhityas.

A padya sāhitya may admit of being sung in a number of tunes. For example a Tiruppugazh hymn can be

sung in a variety of tunes without offence to sāhitya bhāva. But a gadya sāhitya will not lend itself to this change. The sāhitya syllables herein are intimately interwoven into the music and they both become an inseparable texture. See for example, the dhātu and mātu of the kriti, *Viḍamu syēavē.*

Kritis with Charanas of Different Dhātus

In addition to the classical *Ghanarāga Pañcharatnam,* Tyāgarāja has composed the following kritis whose charaṇas have different dhātus :

(1) *Ninuvinā sukhamu gāna* —Tōgi rāga
(2) *Śrī Raghuvara suguṇālaya* —Bhairavi rāga
(3) *Brōchēvārevarē* —Śrirañjani rāga
(4) *Enduka nirdaya* —Harikāmbhōji rāga
(5) *Śri Raghuvarāpramēya* —Kambōji rāga
(6) *Nāmoralanuvini* —Ārabhi rāga
(7) *Nī pada paṅkajamula* —Bēgada rāga
(8) *Maravakarā nava* —Dēvagāndhāri raga

The musical truth underlying the distinctive personalities of rāgas is revealed in each of these pieces.

Kritis Composed During Different Periods

Tyāgarāja's compositions may be grouped into those composed during his (1) Early, (2) Middle and (3) Later periods.

(1) Early period compositions comprise those composed till his 30th year.

They are mostly Divyanāma kirtanas and kritis with single charaṇas. Their musical construction is simple

and are in Sanskrit and Telugu. The sāhityas in many cases consist of doxologies. They are mostly in praise of his Dhyāna mūrti, Śrī Rāma They are in familiar rāgas,

e.g., *Brindāvana lōla* —Tōḍi rāga
Sujana jīvana —Khamās

(2) Middle period compositions comprise those composed between his 30th and 60th year.

Kritis in rare rāgas and kritis rich in music are seen during this period. Beautiful sangatis, literary flourishes and poetic ideas are also seen in them.

The *Ghanarāga Pañcharatnam* and the following are examples :

Jānaki ramaṇa —Śuddhasīmantini rāga
Manasu svādhīna —Śaṅkarābharaṇa rāga
Koluvamaregadā —Tōdi rāga
Nāyeḍa vañchana —Nabhōmaṇi rāga

(3) Later period compositions are characterised by mature music and mature sāhitya. These are highly polished and delicately chiselled pieces.

Evari māṭa —Kāmbhoji rāga
O Ránga Śāyi —Kāmbhōji rāga
Dārini telusukoṇṭi —Śuddhasāveri rāga
Nājīvādhārū —Bilahari rāga

Genesis of some Compositions

"*Vinarādā nā manavi*"

God has his own ways of proclaiming the greatness of his devotees. The circumstances that led to the

composition of the kriti "*Vinarādā nā manavi*" (Dēvagāndhāri rāga) is as inspiring as it is revealing.

Tyāgarāja happened to visit Śrīrangam during the Chaitrōtsavam. He was staying in a house in South Chitra Street. This house was near the corner of the South Chitra Street and West Chitra Street and was in the *Thervādam Pokki sandhu*. This house now bears the door number 86. When the Deity on golden horseback was coming at a distance, Tyāgarāja, who from the front of his house looked at the procession, was so moved that he forthwith burst forth into the song "*Rāju vedalē jūtamu rāre*". The Deity came majestically borne by the 16 trained bearers and passed the corner. Tyāgarāja wanted to go near the Deity and have darṣan of *Vaibhōga Raṅga*, but the surging crowds, particularly at the corner, made it difficult for him to go near the Deity and have darṣan. Disappointed, he stood.

In the meantime, the procession which had passed the corner suddenly came to a standstill. The bearers became benumbed as it were and felt that they were unable to move. (On such occasions, it is usual to presume that some evil eye had cast its wicked influence and steps are taken to neutralize the effect). Feeling that some *dhriṣṭi* had overtaken the procession, acts to neutralize it were performed. Later the Dēvadasis and Rājadāsis who were going in front of the Deity were asked to dance by way of propitiating the Deity. Even then there was no sign of the bearers regaining strength to move. Sometime later, one of the Temple Priests became inspired and said, "The great bhakta is standing

there (pointing to the corner). If he is brought and made to have darṣan of the Deity, the procession will move." Immediately the Temple officials and priests went in a body and spotted out Tyāgarāja and apprised him of all that had taken place. Tyāgarāja, visibly moved, came near the Deity and sang the famous song "*Vinarādā nā manavi*", "Will you not listen to my request" (the request being that the Deity should move). In the anupallavi, the words "*Kānta kāntalella kāmiñchi pilachitē*" refer to the fact that the Dēvadāsis danced and beckoned Raṅganātha to move and that their efforts proved fruitless. The words "*Rājasatulu jūchi rammani pilachite*" refer to the fact that the Rājadāsis subsequently danced and requested Raṅganātha to move and that their efforts also proved fruitless. When the song "Vinarādā" was completed and Dīpārādhana performed, the Deity began to move, to the great joy of all.

Subsequently Tyāgarāja was invited to the Temple, and on that day, the Mūla Vigraha was decorated with Muṭṭaṅgi (coat of pearls). Tyāgarāja was so inspired at the sight of the Lord that he burst forth into the famous kriti "*O Raṅgasāyi*" (Kāmbhōji rāga—Ādi tāḷa). This song furnishes some valuable internal evidence as well.

Nanupālimpa

On the occasion of his daughter's marriage, many disciples brought presents. The disciple, Wālājāpeṭ Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar, brought an inspiring picture of Kōdanṇḍarāma as a gift. (This picture was painted

by Pallavi Ellayyar). In those days there were no railways and the disciple carried the picture on the shoulder, walking all the distance from Wālājāpeṭ to Tiruvaiyār in Tanjore District. As soon as Tyāgarāja saw this charming picture, he burst forth into the famous song "*Nanupālimpa*" in Mōhana rāga. The charaṇa of this song is simply a picturesque description of this beautiful painting. The Pallavi means "Did you come walking all the way to protect me, Oh Lord !"

The Sāhitya of this song has a special significance. Even though he got back the image thrown into the Kāvēri river by his cruel brother, he was not very happy over the incident. Years after the image incident, when the picture came, he thought it was a divine gift. He became rapturous and subsequently performed pūja to both the Rāma vigraha and the picture. This picture can even now be seen in Tiruvaiyār.

Chintistunnāḍe

Once, on the occasion of the Saptasthānam festival, a large concourse of pilgrims had gathered in the Praṇatārthiharasvāmi temple in Tiruvaiyār. This annual festival[1] is the pride of Tiruvaiyār and Tyāgaraja himself accompanied the procession every year leading

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[1] The Deities of the Seven Holy Shrines, Tiruvaiyār, Tiruppayanam, Tiruvedikudi, Tiruchotrutturai, Tirukkandiyur, Tiruppunturutti and Tiruneyttanam (Tillasthanam) are carried in gaily decorated glass palanquins, *i.e.* palanquins studded with small pieces of looking glass.

(Contd.)

his Bhajana party. His bhajana was attended by yatis, vidvāns, musicians and composers. Tyāgarāja came to be called *Bhūloka Nārada*. It took more than twentyfour hours for the procession to return to the temple after touching the famous shrines *en route*.

The temple was filled to overflowing that day and it was a sea of humanity engaged devoutly in singing sacred songs. Tyāgarāja was visibly moved at the glorious sight and sang in a poetic vein the famous kriti, *Chintistunnāḍe* (Mukhāri rāga—Ādi tāḷa). The substance of the song is, "Finding that all people were engaging themselves in Bhajanas, Yama was seriously

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The main palanquin starts from Tiruvaiyār in the morning and is joined on the way by the palanquins of the respective temples *en route*. The entire route is decorated with flags, festoons and greens. Numerous bhajana parties accompany the procession. Owners of shops and residents of houses on the way vie with each other in giving shelter and refreshments to the pilgrims, accompanying the procession. When the Grand Procession of Seven Palanquins with an accompanying crowd of devotees, numbering more than a lakh, enters Tiruvaiyār the following morning, it is an inspiring sight. Tyāgarāja who led his bhajana used to sing kritis appropriate to the time of the day and night *en route*. Maha Vaidyanatha Ayyar and Patnam Subrahmanya Ayyar have during their life-time participated in the bhajana of the Saptesthanam festival.

Rivers have to be crossed during the course of the journey touching the Seven Shrines. If the rivers happen to be in floods, the bearers of the Palanquins skilfully swim across the rivers, bearing the palanquins on their shoulders and reach the other side.

brooding over the fact that he might ultimately have no work to do, all the people automatically going to heaven". Yama feared that even the man in the street had no chance of coming under his sway, since he was spending his time, singing the Saṅkîrtanas (devotional songs) of Tyāgarāja.

Nidhi chāla sukhamā

Soṇṭi Veṅkaṭaramaṇayya felt proud of his disciple, Tyāgarāja. One day he convened a meeting of the vidvāns in Tiruvaiyār and asked Tyāgarāja to sing some of his compositions before them. That day Tyāgarāja sang his kriti, *Dorugunā iṭu vaṇṭi seva* in Bilahari rāga—Ādi tāḷa in a splendid manner. With the theme, *Kamitaphaladāyakiyau Sīta* in the third charaṇa, he developed a brilliant and thought—provoking niraval and followed it up with kalpana svaras of variegated patterns and endless beauty. The Guru as well as the vidvāns present was thrilled. Towards the close of the performance, Soṇṭi Veṅkaṭaramaṇayya by way of eulogizing his disciple's performance said "*Dorugunā iṭu vaṇṭi Śiṣyuḍn* ?" (can one get a disciple like him ?) So saying, he decorated Tyāgarāja with some of the costly presents which he himself had received from the Mahārājah of Tanjore.

Subsequently, it was decided that Tyāgarāja should perform before Soṇṭi Veṅkaṭasubbayya, the chief Āsthāna Vidvān of Tanjore court and the father of Soṇṭi Veṅkaṭaramaṇayya. A day on which all the samsthāna vidvāns were expected to be present in Tanjore was chosen for the purpose. The arrangement

was that the vidvāns, after listening to Tyāgarāja for an hour or two, should go to the Palace to attend that night's function.

Tyāgarāja was not aware of the Palace engagement for the vidvāns that night. He felt honoured at being invited to perform before the father of his Guru and before an audience which consisted of the cream of the musical genius of Tanjore. He took Kāmbhōji rāga and sang a detailed ālāpana. He followed it up with the rendering of his scholarly kriti, *Mari mari ninne moraliḍani* (Ādi tāḷa). The entire performance including the ālāpana, tāna, rendering of the piece, niraval and kalpana svara occupied eight hours. The vidvāns present wondered how, with such brief training, Tyāgarāja became an eminent performer and composer. The samasthāna vidvāns who were expected to be present that night at a function in the Tanjore Palace forgot all about it. The next day they went to the Palace and told the Mahārājah the reason for their absence at the Palace function and concluded by saying that they were literally immersed in the Gāna rasābdi (ocean of musical joy) the previous night. Soṇṭi Veṅkaṭasubbiah also joined in the tributes and said to the King that he himself honoured the young composer by giving him a seat next to himself and decorated him with some of the valuable presents received by him from the samasthānam. It was then that the desire arose in the mind of Sarabhōji that he should also listen to the music of Tyāgarāja.

Some of the Palace officials went to Tyāgarāja's house and conveyed to him the desire of Sarabhōji to

listen to his music. Normally Tyāgarāja would have responded to the invitation.. He was not a stranger to the Palace. As a young boy, he had accompanied his father to the Palace wherein the latter used to give expositions of the *Rāmāyana* in Tulajāji's court. Rāma Brahmam used to read all the six adhyāyas during Rāma navami festival. But what upset Tyāgarāja was the suggestion that, when he went to the Palace, he should go with a song or two composed in praise of the Māhārajah of Tanjore. The situation was aggravated by their statement that he would be honoured with a gift of 50 acres of land and a big bar of gold in return.

Tyāgarāja got enraged and gave a fitting reply in the song in Kalyāni rāga "*Nidhi chāla sukhamā*". The whole song is a series of interrogations addressed to his manas. He says "Oh, manas! Do not be treacherous! Speak out the truth. Which conduces to greater bliss? Is it praise of Rāma or the praise of mortal man who is just a mass of pride and conceit?" The Palace officials were hardly prepared for this musical reply. They withdrew unwillingly and reported to Sarabhōji all that had taken place.

This incident happened about the year 1802, three years after Sarabhōji came to the throne. When he ascended the throne, the British East India Company had taken away the ruling powers from him and Sarabhōji was just a King in name. He took to heart Tyāgarāja's blunt refusal. He sent two of his trusted lieutenants on horseback to fetch Tyāgarāja. The moment those men left the Palace, the King was seized

with a severe stomach-ache and none of the Darbār Physicians were able to bring him any relief. Astrologers were sent for and one of them opined that this ailment was perhaps the consequence of some great soul being insulted. Immediately Sarabhōji sent another pair of his trusted lieutenants and ordered the earlier messengers not to approach Tyāgarāja. These people rushed on horseback at terrific speed and contacted the previous pair, before they actually went to Tyāgarāja's house. The moment these four people started returning to Tanjore, Sarabhōji felt an instant relief. He thanked God. He realized the greatness of Tyāgarāja. Subsequently he went to Tyāgarāja's house in Tiruvaiyār, expressed regret for what had taken place and the two became good friends since that time. Tyāgarāja's Ēkādasi bhajanas were attended by Sarabhōji, his son-in-law Mōti Rao and members of the Royal household including ladies. They stayed in the Kalyāna Mahāl during the whole night. This Palace is situated at the backyard of the house of Tyāgarāja and one could hear the sacred songs by Tyāgarāja and disciples clearly from this Palace. When the Ēkādasi bhajana was over, all the members of the Royal household returned back to Tanjore early in the morning, some on horseback and the rest in carriages.

In those days, it was a common thing for composers to compose songs in praise of Rulers. Tyāgarāja's famous varna in Tōdi rāga—Aṭa tāḷa—beginning with the words "Kanakāṅgi" was in honour of Sarabhōji. The *Sarabhēndra Bhūpāla Kuravañji* is a dance drama

written in honour of Sarabhōji. But Tyāgarāja felt that he was a trustee and that he should utilize his talents only to praise God or in singing of other great themes and not for singing the praise of mortal man. When Tyāgarāja gave a fitting reply in the song "*Nidhi chālā sukhamā*" his mother congratulated him on his heroic stand. His father was not alive at that time. If he had been alive, he too would have felt overjoyed at his son's stand. The *Nidhi chāla sukhamā* incident raised Tyāgarāja in the estimation of his contemporaries. Many came to revere him as a *Mahāpuruṣa*. But his elder brother, who was more a man of the world felt sorry that Tyāgarāja curtly refused the royal offer.

The desire, however, persisted in the mind of Sarabhōji that he must give some aid to Tyāgarāja, if possible even without the latter's knowledge.

Incident of the Coins

One day, Sarabhōji commissioned two of his lieutenants to mingle with the bhaktas accompanying Tyāgarāja's Uñchavritti bhajana and gently drop into his Uñchavritti vessel some gold coins. The lieutenants accompanied Tyāgarāja from behind and unnoticed by him gently dropped at intermittent intervals the gold coins one by one. Some disciples noticed this, but they had not the courage to interfere, since they knew that the men were from the Palace. As misfortune would have it, when at a subsequent stage, they dropped a coin, it dashed against the edge of the vessel and, making a ringing sound, went in. The previous coins

were dropped right into the centre of the rice contents and no sound was heard. When Tyāgarāja heard the sound of a coin, he asked his disciples what the matter was. They revealed to him all that had taken place. He got infuriated and immediately emptied the contents of the vessel on the road and proceeded with his Uñchavritti bhajana. He felt that even the rice in the vessel got contaminated by the coins.

Even after this incident, Sarabhōji insisted that he must be allowed to offer some kind of *kaiṅkaryam* to the composer. Reluctantly the latter allowed some of the siṣyas who came to study under him to be fed in the Kalyāṇa Mahāl at the Raja's expense.

Bhavanuta

One day, by a curious irony of circumstances, Tyāgarāja had no food to eat. The whole day he starved. (This incident took place during the early period of his life.) In the night at about 11 p.m. an old man with a heavy bundle on his head, and accompanied by a lady and a servant, came in search of Tyāgarāja. The latter welcomed him and felt very sad that he had nothing to give the guests. The old man said, "Don't worry, Tyāgu ! I have brought enough provisions." So saying, he gave orders to his servant to cook food. As the preparations were going on, the old gentleman as well as his wife went on conversing with Tyāgarāja. When the food was prepared, it was offered for naivedhyam to the Lord. Then all of them had a hearty meal. The lady served the food to all.

Even after the meal they were talking with Tyāgarāja. When it was nearing day break, the visitors blessed Tyāgarāja and said that he would become great. They formally took leave and went out and disappeared. Tyāgarāja came out and looked for them, ran hither and thither but all in vain. Later on, by a divine flash, he concluded that the old gentleman and lady were Śrī Rāmā and Sītā and the servant who cooked that night was none other than the great Āñjanēya. That day he composed the kriti in Mōhana rāga, *Bhavanuta*. The burden of the song is : "Oh Lord! who came to my house and spoke to me in such abundance, please rest in my heart and free yourself of your wearisomeness".

Another song composed on the occasion paying a tribute to Āñjanēya was *Kaluguna pade nīraga* (Pūrṇalalita rāga—Ādi tāḷa). During the Ārādhana festival of Tyāgarāja, this song is invariably sung by members of Tyāgarāja's Siṣya Parampara in the morning at the samādhi.

Endu dāgi nāḍo (*Incident of the Icon*)

Just before a Bhōgi festival, a dispute arose between Tyāgarāja and his elder brother, through no fault of the former. Some days after the Bhōgi festival, as Tyāgarāja was away for Uñchavritti, the cruel brother in great anger took the Rāma Vigraha and threw it in the river Kāvēri at the southern end of the street (Tirumañjana vīdhi[1]). Tyāgarāja returned home and

[1] This street is called Tirumanjana Vidhi because the Deity of the local temple is taken to that bathing ghat during the festival, Ani Tirumanjanam.

discovered to his horror that the image was missing.

This incident happened before the partition between the brothers took place.

It was Tyāgarāja's practice to return home the moment the Uñchavritti vessel became full (with rice). He went to the different parts of Tiruvaiyār and suburbs for Uñchavritti. In his earlier years, he was not accompanied by many siṣyas as was the case later in his life.

When he lost the image, he sang the pathetic song *Endu dāgi nāḍo.* The opening music of this song reveals the mental anguish of the composer. Pieces like *Nēnendu vetakudurā* (Karnāṭaka byāg) were also composed on this occasion. He lost interest in his life. The news of the loss of the image spread everywhere. His siṣyas invited him to come and stay in their respective places just for diversion. For the Śivarātri pūja he went to Mānambuchāvaḍi in Tanjore and stayed with his disciple, Mānambuchāvaḍi Veṅkaṭasubbayyar. For the Panguṅi Uttiram festival he went to Tiruvārūr. He returned back to Tiruvaiyār for the Saptasthānam festival. He had a dream wherein he was told the precise location of the lost image on the Kāvēri bed. He rushed to the place and found the image at the very spot indicated in the dream. The vigraha proper was first found and the Tiruvāsi (the ornamental arch over the head of the image) was found at another neighbouring spot. He was all joy when he got back the image and returned home in great ecstasy. Thus he was without his favourite image for a couple of months.

At the spot at which the image was thrown, Rāmuḍu Bhāgavatar (the great grandson of Tyāgarāja's elder brother) lost a son. The son accidentally fell in the river at that very spot and got drowned.

PEARLS

A string of pearls or beautiful thoughts can be called from Tyāgarāja's songs. A few examples are given below :

1. The life spent in swimming in the milky ocean of devotion is the life worthily spent ; all else constitute a burden to the earth.
   (*Nī bhakti bhāgya sudhā*—Jayamanōhari rāga)
2. Knowledge of the science of music conduces to bliss Divine.
   (*Saṅgīta sāstra jñanamu*—Mukhāri rāga)
3. Is there salvation for people who are devoid of devotion and who do not possess a knowledge of the science of music ?
   (*Mōkṣamu galadā*—Sāramati rāga)
4. When there is the royal road (of Rāma bhakti) leading to Eternal Bliss, why seek ye the by-lanes ?
   (*Chakkanirāja*—Kharaharapriya rāga)
5. Meditation (on Rāma) is the supremest purificatory bath.
   (*Dhyānamē varamaina*—Dhanyasi rāga)
6. (The whole universe being Brahman), where shall I spot you out and embrace you ?
   (*Endu kangilintura*—Śuddhadēśi rāga)
7. A wealthy person who does not spend his money for virtuous causes at appropriate time, what does it matter whether lives or dies ?

(*Samayamu telisi*—Asāveri rāga)

8. Music devoid of devotion will not lead to salvation.

(*Saṅgrīta jñānamu bhakti vīnā*—Dhanyāsi rāga)

9. However well one might have studied, without listening to the wise utterances of the Great, and without drinking in the nectar of the golden sayings of bhaktas, wisdom will not come to one.

(*Buddhi rādu*—Saṅkarābharaṇa rāga)

10. The darśana of the person who has been blessed with the supreme wealth of Rāma bhakti (devotion to Rama) is an indescribable bliss. It is impossible to describe that bliss. It should be experienced.

(*Rāma bhakti sāmrājyamu*—Śuddhabaṅgaḷa rāga)

11. For the great one, who has conqured his manas, where is the need for mantra and tantra ? To him who knows that this (physical) body is not the same as his self, where is the need for penance ?

(*Manasu svādhīnamaina*—Saṅkarābharaṇa rāga)

12. Without peace (of mind) there is no bliss. Whether he is a man of wealth or a philosopher, whether he is blessed with wife, children and material wealth or whether he has performed japa and tapa, to all alike, without peace, there is no bliss.

(*Sāntamuleka*—Sāma rāga)

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Prof. Sambamoorthy has widely travelled having been associated with UNESCO and the International Society for Music Education for a number of years.

This short Biography has been specially prepared by him to mark the 200th Birth Anniversary of the Tyāgarāja so that the common man can know something about his life and compositions.